

Forensic Pathology

Module 4

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FSC-101
Forensic Science in Criminal Investigation

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Pathology – from Greek

- “pathos” = disease
- “logos” = study
- **Anatomic Pathology** – study of disease by examination of tissues removed at surgery or at autopsy
- **Clinical Pathology** – diagnosis of disease by laboratory testing.

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Forensic Pathology

A year of training or 2 years of experience after becoming trained as a general pathologist, therefore:

- BS/BA- 4 years
- Postgraduate training in pathology – 4 years
- Medical School – 4 years
- 1 or 2 additional years

➡ *Generally a total of 13 years after high school graduation*

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Role of Forensic Pathologist

- **Primary Function:**
Examination of the dead body
- **Deaths must be investigated:**
 - Sudden
 - Unnatural
 - Unexplained
 - Violent

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Forensic Pathologist

- **Coroner:**
 - Elected official
 - Lacks training/experience
 - Inquires to the cause of death
- **Medical Examiner**
 - Physician
 - Pathologist
 - Certifies death

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Specific Activities of the Forensic Pathologist

“Autopsy” – from Greek

- “auto” = self
- “opsy” = look

“Necropsy” – from Greek

- “necros” = self
- “opsy” similar to “biopsy”; “bios” = life

“Postmortem examination” often shortened to “Post”

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Forensic Pathology

- Manner of Death
- Cause of Death

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Forensic Pathology

- Manner of Death:
 - Homicide
 - Suicide
 - Accident
 - Natural
 - Unclassified/Incomplete

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Forensic Pathology

- Attendance at the Scene of Death:
 - Total Picture
 - Responsibility for the Body
 - Observe
 - Notes/photos
 - Transport of body to mortuary

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Forensic Pathologist

- Through the Autopsy:
 - Determine cause of death
 - Extent of injuries
 - Presence of natural disease or poisoning
 - Opinion as to mechanism and time of death

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The Autopsy –

External Examination – careful evaluation of the body surface

- ID body
- Measure body
- Examine clothing
- General physique/state of nutrition
- Document injuries
- Stiffness (rigor mortis)
- Post mortem hypostasis (livor mortis)
- Radiographs (X-Rays)

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The Autopsy –

Internal Examination – detailed exercise in morbid anatomy

- Open body
- Head – Skull, brain
- Neck, thoracic & abdominal organs
- Blood samples
- Stomach contents
- Hair (head, pubic, eyebrow, eyelash)
- Other: Urine, ocular fluid, bile

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