

FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Supervisor:

Dr Karen Gunson

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Karen Gunson, the State Medical Examiner, Clifford Nelson and Larry Lewman, Deputy State Medical Examiners (all Board certified forensic pathologists.)

Location:

This rotation occurs at the Oregon State Medical's facility in Portland.

Duration:

Four weeks

Goals and objectives:

During training, each resident will master the following skills:

Patient Care

Demonstrate uncompromising respect for human remains and foster this attitude among other personnel.

Demonstrate appropriate respect for the confidentiality of patient information.

Understand the significance of proper consent for autopsy examination and the significance of consent to perform a limited autopsy.

Medical Knowledge

Identify artifactual findings of decomposition and embalming.

Perform gross specimen photography using handheld and stand-mounted cameras.

Understand the proper use and interpretation of ancillary studies that must be anticipated at the time of autopsy including microbiology, toxicology, chemistry, electron microscopy, cytogenetics and molecular diagnostics.

Sample representative tissues for archival storage and histologic examination.

Demonstrate suitable diagnostic skills using both gross and microscopic materials from cases showing common adult and pediatric diseases and malformations.

Know the use of common special stains and immunohistochemical markers for the diagnosis of infectious diseases, intracellular and extracellular accumulations, and malignancies.

Practice-Based Learning and Improvement

Perform adult, pediatric and fetal autopsies according to the modified Rokitansky procedure.

Know the limitations of the standard protocols and be able to plan special dissections that address the needs of unusual cases.

Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Identify and contact relevant caregivers at the time of autopsy.

Succinctly present relevant history, gross findings, microscopic findings, and laboratory data to individual clinicians and pathologists, or to groups of medical students, clinicians, and pathologists at the autopsy table, by telephone, and in formal conferences.

Know the differences between a cause of death, a mechanism of death, and a manner of death.

Formulate the cause of death including the underlying cause of death, intervening causes of death, if any, and the immediate cause of death, as well as any other conditions contributing to the death of a patient.

Prepare complete, concise and accurate provisional and final autopsy reports in a timely manner.

Professionalism

Become independent in technical aspects of autopsy practice, including evisceration, removal of the brain and the spinal cord, the eyes, and the temporal bones.

Know the regulations governing the safe practice of autopsy pathology including those related to exposure to bloodborne and airborne pathogens and formaldehyde.

Know the proper use of protective equipment for the practice of autopsy pathology.

Know the special circumstances requiring urgent autopsy examination.

Exhibit appropriate care to protect confidential information from unauthorized access.

Understand the general limitations of funeral cosmesis as it affects the performance of the autopsy

Know special circumstances related to autopsy of members of different ethnic and religious groups.

Systems-Based Practice

Utilize consultative services in a cost-effective fashion.

The resident is expected:

- To gain basic understanding of the circumstances and principles of medicolegal death investigation.
- To appreciate the public health issues of death investigation.
- To gain basic understanding of the justice administration role of the forensic pathologist.
- To learn about the methods of crime scene investigation.
- To familiarize him/herself with proper handling of evidence as related to crime investigation and the medicolegal autopsy.
- To gain enough experience to make decisions about a possible career in forensic pathology.

Graduated responsibility, supervision and evaluation:

During the 1st week of the rotation, the resident observes and assists the staff forensic pathologist during autopsies.

The resident is given gradually more responsibility for dissection and description until during the final week he/she is expected to dictate external findings, complete the dissection and issue a final report on selected cases.

In general the resident is under close supervision and accompanies the forensic pathologists in the course of all responsibilities in the evaluation of radiological, toxicological, odontological and anthropological data.

The resident is encouraged to make follow-up phone calls to physicians and family.

The resident is continuously evaluated for growing competency and relative independence of his/her activities adjusted accordingly.

Residents are formally evaluated at the end of each rotation, using the form provided by the Department of Pathology at OHSU, and the results are discussed with the resident. The evaluation forms are kept on file in the Department of Pathology.