



Bridgewater State College
Department of Criminal Justice
Proudly Presents

Principles of Forensic Medicine & Roles of Medical Examiner

Presented by:

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If your death turned out to be sudden, unexpected, unusual or suspicious, whose job would it be to find out what happened? Well, medical examiners or coroners would, depending on their jurisdictions or state laws. People often think that their job seems a little strange and gloomy, or very fascinating because of the influence of the popular "CSI" television drama. But, the reality is quite different. I would like to say TV drama is TV drama. The majority of deaths in the real world are actually natural. People who are dead can't talk, but their bodies tell the story of the last moments of their life.

In this special lecture, we need to understand the real world of the forensic medicine. The basic role of the medical examiner is to examine bodies, take samples and communicate with the family of the deceased in determining the cause and manner of death. Their basic but powerful tool is the autopsy. They examine not only the dead body, but also the death scene (sometimes crime scene). They determine the cause of death both medically (scientifically) and reasonably. There are some misconceptions about the autopsy or forensic medicine. The medical examiners do not work for the prosecutors. They are simply trying to find out what happened from an objective and unbiased standpoint.

Many of the deaths medical examiners deal with would have been prevented: guns and weapons, drugs, fast cars, driving while intoxicated, ignoring one's health status. The final goal of the medico-legal death investigation is to contribute to our community to make a more comfortable, healthy and safe society. So, medical examiners are the front-line surveillance member of our public health system. Someone once asked a medical examiner, 'Isn't it a tragedy that this three-year-old child died?' His answer was "Yes, it is. But it's equally tragic if the person is 13 or 23". We need to learn about lessons from the dead.