

FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

PGY-5

The ACGME accredited one-year, full-time training program is offered to one applicant each academic year. Trainees are responsible under supervision for scene investigations, post-mortem external examinations, autopsies (approximately 250), microscopic evaluation of tissues, interpretation of toxicology, completion of anatomic protocols, appearances in court upon occasion, and conferences with attorneys and/or police officials. Approximately 800 selected autopsies, including a large percentage of homicides, are performed yearly. Trainees have the opportunity to assist in teaching police, coroners, lawyers, medical students and residents and are expected to participate in weekly conferences where cases are presented and topics are discussed. Study of forensic application of anthropology, toxicology, crime scene, odontology, DNA/serology and ballistics will be performed at state or national centers. The fellow is expected to submit a forensic pathology-related article to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE FORENSIC PATHOLOGY FELLOW

- The fellow will gain expertise in forensic pathology by performing autopsies and/or external examinations assigned to him/her in order to determine the cause and manner of death.
- As part of the post mortem examination, a written protocol will be prepared and reviewed. The protocol will contain appropriate interpretations of the gross, microscopic, toxicology, and other ancillary study findings.
- The fellow will document the autopsy findings photographically and with legible diagrams and will assure all digital media are downloaded (x-ray, photographic) and assure that appropriate images are archived during or immediately following each autopsy.
- During the course of the post mortem examination, appropriate bodily fluids/tissues will be collected and submitted for toxicologic examination or metabolic testing. Correct protocols will be followed. The results will then be interpreted in the context of the history and autopsy findings.
- The fellow will demonstrate the ability to perform each autopsy skill in the presence of an attending pathologist.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

PGY-5

- The fellow will develop an opinion as to the cause and manner of death of each case performed prior to discussing the final report with the attending pathologist. Prior to case sign out, the fellow will interact with the attending regarding this opinion.
- The fellow will maintain an up-to-date log book that includes autopsies (with description of type of case, cause and manner of death, and decedent demographics), external examinations, crime scene visits, and observations of or providing of court testimony.
- The fellow will attend the October or January session of the Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course presented by Saint Louis University School of Medicine (<http://medschool.slu.edu/mldi/>) or a comparable course at the discretion of the program director.
- The fellow will attend the annual AFIP Forensic Anthropology Course ([2009 Forensic Anthropology Course Description](#)) or a comparable course at the discretion of the program director.
- The fellow will attend the Forensic Science Workshop held at the National Forensic Science Technology Center in Largo, Florida ([NFSTC Home Page](#)).
- The fellow will read the “Position Paper on the Medical Examiner Release of Organs and Tissues for Transplantation” published online by the National Association of Medical Examiners (<http://www.thename.org>) and be prepared to discuss the application of these guidelines to our coroner system.
- The fellow will visit no fewer than 20 (twenty) death scenes, document his/her findings, interpret pertinent findings and provide a written (electronic) report to the principal pathologist on the case prior to case inception.
- The fellow will gain additional knowledge and expertise about forensic pathology by reading specialty text books and current literature, using electronic or recorded media and

FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

PGY-5

participating in case review conferences and by other resources as necessary (e.g., ASCP Check Samples, CAP FR Surveys).

- The fellow will organize and participate in the twice weekly Forensic Pathology Conference as scheduled.
- The fellow will be available for service work during normal coverage hours, and as such, will be responsible for being the initial contact person for coroners and other investigating agencies referring cases to or inquiring about cases in the Forensic Section.
- The fellow will instruct rotating residents and medical students in the proper techniques of forensic autopsies. This will include instruction in proper dictating methods as well as review of microscopic slides, toxicological studies, ancillary studies, and formation of the cause and manner of death with the resident or medical student in each case the fellow supervises.
- The fellow will take at least one week of night call followed by weekend call per month.
- The fellow will follow-up with the coroner(s) after all cases and s/he will clearly and politely explain findings.
- If a case requires research such as contacting the coroner, contacting law enforcement, reviewing medical records, researching literature, calling the toxicologist, the fellow will do so.
- The fellow will complete cases timely and accurately.
- The fellow will observe court testimony by staff pathologists when possible.
- The fellow will testify in court regarding cases s/he performed as possible.
- The fellow will attend daily pathology department conferences at his/her discretion;

Updated on 2/1/2010

Page 3 of 4

*For information regarding this scope of practice, please contact:
Cynthia A. Schandl, MD, PhD, Forensic Pathology Fellowship Director, (843)792-9462, schandlc@musc.edu;
www.musc.edu/pathology*

FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

PGY-5

forensic pathology topic conference attendance is mandatory.

- The fellow will prepare and submit an abstract to a national forensic pathology forum (AAFS, NAME) and will have the opportunity to present the abstract at a national meeting if accepted. In addition, the fellow will prepare a manuscript of his/her research project and submit same for publication.
- The fellow will participate as an “expert witness” in an in-house mock court proceeding.