Graduate Certificate in Medico-Legal Studies

Forensic Medicine and Pathology

Forensic Medicine and Pathology are crucial fields in the investigation of deaths and injuries, providing key insights into the cause, manner, and circumstances of these events. This glossary aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key terms and vocabulary used in these disciplines.

1. Autopsy
An autopsy, also known as a post-mortem examination, is a detailed examination of a body after death. It involves a systematic inspection of the external body, followed by an internal examination to determine the cause of death.

2. Cause of Death
The cause of death refers to the specific injury or disease that directly led to the individual's demise. It is essential to establish the cause of death accurately in forensic investigations.

3. Manner of Death
The manner of death describes the circumstances in which death occurred. Common manners of death include natural, accidental, suicidal, homicidal, and undetermined.

4. Forensic Pathologist
A forensic pathologist is a medical doctor who specializes in investigating the cause and manner of death. They perform autopsies and analyze medical records to determine the circumstances surrounding a death.

5. Contusion
A contusion is a bruise on the skin caused by blunt force trauma, leading to the rupture of blood vessels beneath the skin. Forensic pathologists often examine contusions to determine the force and direction of impact.

6. Abrasion
An abrasion is a superficial injury to the skin caused by friction or scraping. Forensic pathologists may analyze abrasions to determine the nature of the injury and its potential role in the cause of death.

7. Laceration
A laceration is a deep cut or tear in the skin or flesh. Forensic pathologists examine lacerations to assess the severity of the injury and determine if it played a role in the cause of death.

8. Asphyxia
Asphyxia is a condition characterized by the lack of oxygen supply to the body, leading to unconsciousness or death. Forensic pathologists investigate cases of asphyxia to determine the cause and manner of death.

9. Livor Mortis
Livor mortis, also known as lividity, refers to the post-mortem pooling of blood in the lower parts of the

body, causing a purple discoloration of the skin. Forensic pathologists use livor mortis to estimate the time of death.

10. Rigor Mortis
Rigor mortis is the stiffening of muscles after death due to chemical changes in the body. Forensic pathologists observe rigor mortis to estimate the time of death and assess the circumstances surrounding the event.

11. Algor Mortis
Algor mortis is the post-mortem cooling of the body to the surrounding temperature. Forensic pathologists consider algor mortis when estimating the time of death and determining the cause of death.

12. Toxicology
Toxicology is the study of the effects of drugs, chemicals, and poisons on the body. Forensic toxicologists analyze bodily fluids and tissues to detect the presence of toxic substances that may have contributed to the cause of death.

13. Forensic Anthropology
Forensic anthropology is the application of physical anthropology to the legal process. Forensic anthropologists analyze skeletal remains to determine the age, sex, ancestry, and stature of unidentified individuals.

14. DNA Analysis
DNA analysis is the process of identifying an individual's unique genetic profile using DNA samples. Forensic scientists use DNA analysis to identify suspects, victims, and establish biological relationships in criminal investigations.

15. Ballistics
Ballistics is the study of the flight, behavior, and effects of projectiles, such as bullets and missiles. Forensic ballistics experts examine firearms and ammunition to determine their involvement in shooting incidents.

16. Entomology
Forensic entomology is the study of insects and arthropods in legal investigations. Forensic entomologists analyze the presence of insects on decomposing bodies to estimate the time of death and aid in determining the cause of death.

17. Postmortem Interval
The postmortem interval is the time that has elapsed since death occurred. Forensic investigators use various methods, such as rigor mortis, livor mortis, and entomology, to estimate the postmortem interval in forensic cases.

18. Chain of Custody
The chain of custody is the chronological documentation of the possession, handling, and transfer of evidence in a legal case. Maintaining a secure chain of custody is essential to ensure the integrity of evidence in forensic investigations.

19. Forensic Odontology
Forensic odontology is the application of dental science to legal investigations. Forensic odontologists analyze dental records, bite marks, and dental remains to identify individuals and provide crucial evidence in criminal cases.

20. Trauma Analysis
Trauma analysis involves examining injuries to determine the mechanism, severity, and potential cause of trauma. Forensic pathologists use trauma analysis to reconstruct events leading to injuries and deaths in forensic cases.

21. Postmortem Examination
A postmortem examination, commonly known as an autopsy, is a detailed examination of a deceased individual to determine the cause and manner of death. Forensic pathologists conduct postmortem examinations to gather evidence for legal investigations.

22. Forensic Photography
Forensic photography involves documenting crime scenes, injuries, and evidence using specialized techniques and equipment. Forensic photographers play a crucial role in preserving visual evidence that can aid in investigations and court proceedings.

23. Trace Evidence
Trace evidence refers to small pieces of physical evidence, such as fibers, hairs, and glass fragments, found at a crime scene. Forensic scientists analyze trace evidence to link suspects, victims, and crime scenes in criminal investigations.

24. Forensic Serology
Forensic serology is the analysis of bodily fluids, such as blood, semen, and saliva, in forensic investigations. Forensic serologists use immunological techniques to identify and analyze biological fluids found at crime scenes.

25. Forensic Document Examination
Forensic document examination involves the analysis of handwriting, signatures, and other document features to determine their authenticity and origin. Forensic document examiners provide expert testimony on questioned documents in legal proceedings.

26. Forensic Psychiatry
Forensic psychiatry is the intersection of psychiatry and the legal system. Forensic psychiatrists assess and treat individuals with mental health disorders involved in legal cases, providing expert opinions on their mental state and competency.

27. Forensic Anthropometry
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28. Odor Analysis
Odor analysis involves identifying and analyzing volatile compounds present at crime scenes or on individuals. Forensic scientists use odor analysis to link suspects, victims, and crime scenes based on distinct odors associated with specific substances.

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