



# The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>

Winter/Spring 2017

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Spring!!!

How time flies! In speaking with many of you since my election in October, many offices have been extremely busy – new cases coupled with the remaining follow up cases from 2016. Busy is good! However, be kind to yourself, your psyche, and your caliber of investigations. Take time to breathe and enjoy something positive. Your emotional health is pinnacle in your longevity in death investigation. In other words..... find your happy place!

With that said – I have been contemplating the WCMEA in general. As I penned this presidential letter I often had to step away from the computer with resounding thoughts of “What to write...What to write....What to write?”. In this year of new national presidential turmoil there is an ever resounding mediated theme...“Let’s make America great again”. Love it or hate it, as a country it is the motto we have to work with. The same thoughts came to mind as I consider this organization; Can we make the WCMEA great again?

Love the WCMEA, or hate the WCMEA, it is what we have as a professional organization and we need some work on it as members of that organization. Just what will it take to make this organization what it should be? How can we make it a representation of the profession each of you hold so dear? You take pride in the work you do as an individual. However, is that same pride lost as it is carried over to your representing organization? As the president I ask- what can we do as an organization, both individually and as a group, to attain the recognition for a “Job Well Done”? OWNERSHIP! That’s the word!!! OWNERSHIP! Somewhere along the paths of our careers we have heard the word used. Taking possession of ones own responsibility. Every job you do, from the simplest of management tasks to leading and guiding the most complex of projects, is a direct reflection on you as a professional. Your public's perception is a direct reflection of your skill, knowledge, and reputation. It is essential for you to take ownership of your work and ensure that it reflects positively on you as a professional.

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## The Examiner

### President's Message . . . . *Continued*

In my 11 year tenure as member of this association, with three of those years as a member of the Board of Directors, I have overheard a great deal of discussion both positive and negative. One comment has been quite recurrent-“The WCMEA....Just what does it do for me anyway?”; “I don’t belong to the WCMEA because it’s a joke!”; “I don’t go to conferences because it’s nothing but a big party”; “I don’t belong because I don’t care for some of the other individuals that attend”; “I don’t go to the conferences because I don’t need to learn anything more. I have been doing just fine all these years”.

All of the comments involve your ownership as far as your feelings. I ask – has your level of ownership closed the doors to belonging to an organization? I’m certain many you are involved, or have been involved in alternate organizations. I’m also certain every involvement had its drawbacks including paying dues, voting, volunteering, etc. After all, who needs an additional organization when we are already busy with our own lives? The benefits of belonging to an organization far outweigh the disadvantages.

#### **BENEFIT 1: PROFESSIONALISM**

Belonging to a professional organization like the WCMEA aids in establishing legitimacy. This is especially true when you are new to the death investigation profession. As a new investigator where do you turn for education, topics of discussion, case investigation assistance, or investigative resources? The WCMEA provides that support through venues such as conferences, and even its own website. The website has experienced recent changes in order to meet our members needs on both the secure member side and the public side.

Website changes will continue in order to meet the needs of death investigators statewide. When last have you utilized the website? If it doesn’t meet your professional needs please forward the information you feel would assist your colleagues, be certain to share your wisdom so we may meet those needs of both the new and seasoned investigators. Be that mentor - provide the means for additional education. Nothing speaks louder than words of experience!

#### **BENEFIT 2: NETWORKING**

I know many of you have shared comments similar to “I don’t attend conference because there is no benefit in doing so”, or “It’s nothing but a party”. Part of involvement in an organization is the benefit of networking. Attending events or functions the WCMEA opens a pathway to forming collegial relationships. They allow access to 250+ “Walking Books of Knowledge”, namely other members of the association. Members of whom have “Been there! Done that! Investigated that! Made mistakes at that! And learned from those mistakes!”. Those members willingly share their experience outside of the classroom, and experience really is the best teacher.

I can honestly state without my developing a professional network, I would have floundered in a career of which I surely would have failed. Does that mean you will always see eye to eye with your colleagues? Absolutely not...and that is OK! Do not close the door- that individual may be the exact person that will extend a helping hand in a mass fatality event. We are all aware of just how short life is. Harboring animosity prevents real growth in this profession.

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President's Message . . . . *Continued*

**BENEFIT 3: TRAINING**

The WCMEA has provided death investigators biannual training for a multitude of years. My question to you as a medicolegal death investigator (MLDI) is..... *Do you attend the trainings?* I have heard many MLDI's do not attend because of various reasons some include "There is nothing there I can learn", "it is just a big party, so I don't go", "I have been doing death investigation for years and have not needed any education to do so. I'm just fine with the way things of been".

Every profession, from McDonald's to medicine, or lawyers to factory workers, requires their employees to attend some continued education to a varying degree. Many professions require a certification and/or state licensure. Non-physician, "Lay", Coroners and Medical Examiners do not currently require same mandate. Many of you are aware of this. Here again comes that word...*Ownership*.

I encourage you to evaluate YOUR rationale as to why you do, or do not, seek educational opportunities in effort to be at the TOP UP YOUR GAME. With the ever-changing world of death and its causes, missing the opportunity of educating yourself is a sad misfortune. You are a critical aspect of the criminal justice system. If death investigation were a professional sport you just "sidelined" yourself. The "CSI EFFECT" and overwhelming public infatuation with death investigation has figuratively changed your playing field. Remaining on the sidelines with a game played by only pathologists and law enforcement limits the total maneuvers of the team. You have to be in the game!

I had a high school chemistry/anatomy teacher of whom I had great disdain during education tenure. His weekly motto-" life is like a sewer...you get out of it what you put into it!!!" I despised that man at the time only to realize I learned more from him than I could ever really thank him for. I have carried that motto with me EVERY day of my professional career. On the eve of graduating with my second college degree, I called to thank him for pushing me to excel. Every single time I wanted to short myself of a job well done I thought of him. Adequacy was not an option. Please do not settle for adequate.

Take ownership my fellow colleagues. Evaluate yourself and your position in your career. Contact me, or members of this organization and let us know how we may improve the WCMEA, conference training, or our representation of you. Opt to take a vital role in our group of professionals if nothing more than to educate our future members. Your experience speaks volumes!

Take the time to evaluate your own "sewer system". Help me to help you, so the WCMEA can become great again!

Sincerely,

Angela Hinze RN, FNE, F-ABMDI, BSCJ-CSI, SANE  
WCMEA President



## Fall Conference Highlights

The 2016 Fall Conference & Annual Meeting was held at the Premier Best Western Bridgewood Resort Hotel & Conference Center in Neenah. There were 55 attendees who enjoyed presentations on topics ranging from water recovery of human remains and officer involved shootings to suicide survivors and case reviews.



WCMEA Lobbyist Chris Lenzendorf provided crucial information regarding the 979 legislation. He detailed this last legislative session, and proposed new strategies for the next session.

The election for the 2016-2017 WCMEA Board of Directors was held, and the results were revealed at the annual meeting. Congratulations are in order for the following:

**President:** *Angela Hinze (Columbia County)*  
**1<sup>st</sup> VP:** *Amanda Thoma (Green Lake County)*  
**2<sup>nd</sup> VP:** *PJ Schoebel (Dodge County)*  
**Secretary:** *Kalynn Podoski (Brown County)*  
**Treasurer:** *Rory Groessl (Kewaunee County)*  
**Sergeant At Arms:** *Joe Morovits (Crawford County)*  
**3-Year Trustee:** *Dr. Agnieszka Rogalska (Dane County)*  
**Member At Large:** *Patty Schachtner (St. Croix County)*  
**Past President:** *Jennifer Schroeter (Kenosha County)*

The WCMEA awarded one \$500 scholarship at the annual banquet. The intent of the scholarship is to provide active WCMEA members the opportunity to receive training in a program, course, or seminar related to medicolegal death investigation. The scholarship was presented to Barb Wuensch, Deputy Medical Examiner in La Crosse County. Congratulations Barb!!



The WCMEA would like to thank Amanda Thoma, Green Lake County Coroner and WCMEA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, for all of her hard work and dedication in putting together a stellar program. Additional thanks to the staff at the Premier Best Western Bridgewood Resort Hotel & Conference Center, as well as the many presenters and exhibitors for their time, hospitality and expertise.

The association would also like to acknowledge the following sponsors who generously supported the conference, making it a huge success: American Tissue Services Foundation, Blood Center of Wisconsin, Lions Eye Bank, and RTI Donor Services.

Looking ahead at 2017 . . . Please mark your calendars! The Fall Conference and Annual Meeting will be held October 23-25, 2017 at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake. Look forward to seeing you there.

## New App for Registering to be Organ, Tissue and Eye Donor

Apple and Donate Life America announced, iPhone users are able to sign up to be an organ, eye and tissue donor right from the Health app using iOS 10. Through a simple sign up process, iPhone users can learn more and take action with just a few taps. All registrations submitted from iPhone are sent directly to the National Donate Life Registry managed by Donate Life America. The ability to quickly and easily become a nationally-registered donor enables people to carry their decision with them wherever they go.



The Health app on iPhone provides a complete view of your health and fitness data all in one place. The app includes Medical ID, which makes critical health information available in case of emergency to first responders and is accessible from the iPhone lock screen. Medical ID can display categories like medical conditions, allergies, medications, blood type and emergency contacts. And with iOS 10, Medical ID offers the ability to register as an organ, eye and tissue donor with Donate Life America.

The App registers donors to the National Donate Life Registry, not the Wisconsin Donor Registry; the donation specialists in Wisconsin have access to check both the Wisconsin Registry and the National Registry. When an individual registers online, no donor dot will be on driver's license or ID until a visit to DMV is made. Please remember to check with your tissue bank or the eye bank for donor designation status. Thank you for your support of donation.

1. Sign up to be an organ, tissue and eye donor
2. Open Health and tap Medical ID.
3. Under Organ Donation, tap Sign Up with Donate Life.
4. Fill out the registration form, then tap Continue at the bottom of the screen.
5. Confirm your registration, then tap Complete Registration with Donate Life.

*Submitted by Joyce Kratz, American Tissue Services Foundation & Donate Life*

## Spring Conference in Review

The 2017 WCMEA Spring Conference was located in the heart of Green Bay at the beautiful Hyatt Regency. Attendance included 36 association members, and 10 vendors. Presentations included domestic violence, anthropology, death certification, drug related deaths, and so much more!

New to the conference this year was student poster presentations. Both Marian University and UW-Oshkosh was represented. The students showcased their hard work on relevant topics in forensics such as photography techniques, and forensic anthropology. The poster presentations were well received and will be making a return for the WCMEA Fall Conference and Annual Meeting in October.

There was tremendous support from our vendor sponsors including: ATSF, Blood Center of WI, RTI Donor Services, and Vision Medical/Jim Mellenthin Sales, LLC. Without the generosity of our partners, the conference would not have been as great of a success.

Many thanks to Amanda Thoma, and the WCMEA Education Committee (Dr. Agnieszka Rogalska, PJ Schoebel, Jessica Blahnik, Angela Hinze) for their tireless efforts in organizing yet another enriching training conference.

**Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....**



- In **Pierce County**- A 47-year old man is dead after his snowmobile was hit by a passing SUV. According to authorities, the man was attempting to cross US Hwy 10 on a marked snowmobile trail when he collided with an eastbound SUV. He was alone on the snowmobile and was wearing a helmet at the time of the accident. The man was pronounced dead at the scene.
- In **Racine County**- A 31-year old man was killed in a single-vehicle crash in the Town of Raymond. The man was driving his vehicle at an estimated speed of 90 miles per hour when it rolled over and he was ejected. The man was pronounced dead at the scene. The crash remains under investigation.
- In **Dane County**- An officer fatally shot a man after he emerged from a lake, broke into a home and “aggressed” toward the officer with a pitchfork. The police department had received a call about a man who was chest deep in Lake Monona, flapping and acting oddly. The man threw a rock into the window of a home from the water. The homeowners fled after they heard the man breaking items in the basement. The first officer on the scene was waiting for backup when the man approached the doorway from inside the house with a pitchfork. The officer fatally shot the man after he ignored orders to stop.
- In **Sauk County**- A deer hit by a car went through the windshield of another car near Baraboo, fatally injuring the driver. The crash happened on Hwy 12 in the town of Sumpter. The deer became airborne after impact and entered the path of the southbound Buick, penetrating the windshield and entering the passenger compartment striking the driver. The 65-year old man was taken by Med Flight to UW Hospital in Madison where he was later pronounced dead.
- In **Columbia County**- A 17-year old boy died of injuries in machine shop accident. The teenager became trapped in a machine at GD Roberts Manufacturing in Columbus. He was cleaning scrap metal under a laser cutter when the machine engaged and came down on him. The teen was taken via Med Flight to UW Hospital where he later died. OSHA is investigating.
- In **Grant County**- A 28-year old man was killed in a farming accident. The man was working on his forage chopper when it surged forward and the front tire ran him over. The man was pronounced dead at the scene.
- In **Racine County**- A 49-year old woman died in a house fire. The fire broke out at a home around 11 pm in Mount Pleasant. Dark, black smoke was coming from the home when authorities arrived on scene. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. Authorities say it caused close to \$70,000 worth of damage to the home.
- In **Washington County**- A 57-year old man was fatally shot by a Village of Jackson police officer. Police were called to a home in Jackson for a domestic situation. Family says their mother was being held by a man at knifepoint. Police rushed in and killed him.
- In **Marinette County**- A 26-year old woman drowned while tubing on the Peshtigo River in northeastern Wisconsin. Authorities received a 911 call about a woman missing from a group of tubers who were floating on the river near the Village of Crivitz. Emergency responders went to the scene and tried to find her. A Crivitz resident who was helping in the search found the woman submerged in the river. She was pronounced dead at the scene.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 3-year old girl was killed at her own birthday party. The child saw her grandfather walking towards her from a distance and got excited. She darted into the street to greet him, and was hit by a car. The driver of the car stayed on scene, and is fully cooperating with the investigation.

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**Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....**

- In **Sheboygan County**- A woman is accused of suffocating and killing her 2-year old son. A 27-year old woman called 911 and told the dispatcher that she had killed her son. Officers responded to the apartment building and were confronted by the woman armed with a knife, standing at the top of the main stairway leading to her apartment. The police drew their firearms and ordered the woman to drop her knife. The woman began to descend the stairs holding the knife- ignoring officers' commands. When the woman reached the outside walkway, she put the knife on the ground. She was tased and taken into custody. Officers entered the apartment and located the 2-year old child. He was found in a hallway closet- in a cardboard box that had been stacked below two other cardboard boxes. The child was taken to the hospital where he was later pronounced dead. The mother told police that she "had lost it" and was "tired of looking at him." The 27-year old mother has been charged with one count of first degree intentional homicide, and one count of moving, hiding, burying the corpse of a child.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A father is accused of drowning his 3-month old son after an argument. According to police, the child's parents were arguing when the father grabbed the infant, went to the pond and walked in. Witnesses followed the man but were unable to retrieve the child. 911 was called, and officers ran into the pond in an effort to rescue the boy, but the father was no longer holding him. Police arrested the suspect and began searching for the child, who was found unconscious within minutes. The child was pronounced dead at the scene.
- In **Jefferson County**- A 63-year old man died after ultralight crash. The pilot took off from the Fort Atkinson Municipal Airport and began having engine problems. He tried to guide the plane to a smooth field, but was unable to do so and crashed to the ground, causing the ultralight to ignite. The man was taken to Fort Atkinson Hospital and transferred to UW Hospital in Madison where he later died.
- In **Portage County**- A 29-year old man died on his family's farm after fumes from a cow manure pit mixed with unusual weather conditions to form a "deadly dome of air." The man was cleaning the manure pit and became overwhelmed by gases emanating from the waste repository. He was found by farm workers who had come to help empty the holding unit. Sixteen cows also died on the farm.
- In **Rock County**- A 32-year old man was shot and killed in a tavern parking lot. Police were called to the Turtle Tap for a report of shots fired in the tavern's parking lot. The man was taken to a hospital where he later died. According to authorities, the incident was not a random act and the investigation is ongoing.
- In **Waukesha County**- A 34-year old woman was killed by a single gunshot wound to the head. Police responded to the scene of a suspicious death after the woman was found deceased in her apartment by her brother. The death is being investigated as a homicide. Authorities are searching for a man who had an on-again, off-again friendship with the woman. The man is not from the area, and the woman's car is missing.
- In **Outagamie County**- A 12-year old boy died after being hit by a bus. The boy was walking home from school, and was crossing Second Street at Crooks Avenue when he was struck by a school bus.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 19-year old man died after breaking into a municipal swimming pool. The teenager and several of his friends climbed over a fence at the Washington Park pool at about 10:30 p.m. The teen jumped in the pool, began having trouble and sank to the bottom. A police officer arriving on scene jumped in, brought the victim out of the water and began resuscitative efforts but to no avail. The teen was pronounced dead at the scene.
- In **Rock County**- An 89-year old woman died in a traffic accident outside a Janesville hospital. A three vehicle crash was reported at approximately 3:00 pm at the Racine Street entrance to the SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital. The crash occurred when a westbound Honda Civic made a left turn on a flashing yellow arrow. The turn resulted in a collision with an eastbound pickup truck. The truck, which had a green light, hit the woman's car and both vehicles went off the road. The woman's car struck an SUV which was stopped at a red light at the hospital exit. The woman was pronounced dead at St. Mary's.

### Coroner Training Standard Bill 3.0

Following the most historic election cycle of my lifetime I am optimistic about what has transpired in the Capital in Wisconsin. Following the passage of the WMCEA sponsored Coroner Training Standard Bill 94-0 in the Assembly last session, our Bill is poised to finally become law. Regardless of last sessions results there is plenty of work to do as there are many new legislators in both the Assembly and the Senate. Currently I am working on educating these new legislators on the important role death investigators have within the law enforcement/medical communities. We have our same author Rep. Michael Schraa (R-Oshkosh) to champion our bill. Rep. Schraa has become not only a great advocate for our association but also a good friend. He is currently working on several different Senator's to assist and author our bill in the Senate. Rep. Schraa has been instrumental in guiding this process to ensure we have the necessary horsepower in the Senate to ensure passage.

Now, more than ever, participation from members is going to be critical for our success. There is a definite movement within the Capital to reduce the role of DSPS in licensing and regulating different industries. As the legislature debates the relevancy of licensing tattoo artists, we need to make sure legislators understand how important licensing is for the professionalism of the death investigator community. Contacting your local representatives will go along way in spreading this message. I look forward to the task at hand this session and am always available to answer questions or hear feedback.

*Chris Lenzendorf, WCMEA Lobbyist*

### Training Opportunities

Fall WCMEA Conference  
Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake  
October 23-25, 2017  
[www.wcmea.com](http://www.wcmea.com)

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Opioid Summit  
Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells  
August 9, 2017

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Medicolegal Investigation of Death  
Dearborn Michigan  
May 3-5, 2017  
[www.med.wayne.edu/cme](http://www.med.wayne.edu/cme)

Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course  
St. Louis, Missouri  
September 25-29, 2017  
[www.medschool.slu.edu/mlDi](http://www.medschool.slu.edu/mlDi)

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34th Annual Forensic Science Seminar  
St. Louis Park, Minnesota  
September 28-29, 2017

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Dr. Jentzen's Forensic Symposium  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
May 11-12, 2017  
<https://www.pathology.med.umich.edu/forensics/index.php>

## Fatal Datura Intoxication

Submitted by Sara Schreiber and Wieslawa Tlomak, MD, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office

The Medical Examiner's office received a call that a 51-year-old female had died at a local hospital. She was initially found by her husband in the kitchen. She had consumed six or seven beers and was disoriented. He put her to bed. When he checked on her later he found her unresponsive on the floor. The husband called 911 and initiated CPR. Emergency responders gave her epinephrine and provided CPR, but she was in asystole. She was admitted to the hospital with CPR still in progress. She received more epinephrine and Narcan. A weak pulse was found so she was intubated and admitted to the intensive care unit. She was on a ventilator, had weak pulse but no blood pressure. A short time later it was reported that she became bradycardic down and no pulse could be found. Death was pronounced at that time.

According to the husband her primary medical history includes arthritis in her neck. The husband is unsure, but believes her medications are tramadol and clonazepam. The husband states that she sometimes self-medicates and takes more of her medication than prescribed. He advised that she is a recovering heroin addict who has recently been released from methadone treatment two months ago. He also reported that he believes she may have ingested a moon flower plant that is in their yard. There was a sac of seeds on the plant that is no longer there. He thought the seeds might be hallucinogenic and that she may have ingested them.

An autopsy was performed the following morning. Needle punctures were noted in the right antecubital fossa and on the right dorsal hand. She had resuscitative injuries. Fractures to ribs 1-6, vertical laceration of the liver, and approximately 1000 milliliters of blood in the peritoneal cavity. She had blunt force injuries as well, contusions of the chest and abdomen, contusions of the upper extremities, contusions in the right inguinal area. Specimens recovered during autopsy included vitreous humor, right heart blood, liver, bile and gastric contents. It was noted during autopsy that there were seeds in the stomach. There were some off-white seeds and some small round black seeds.



*Seeds recovered from gastric contents*

Investigators were advised by the laboratory to go to the scene and recover a moon plant seed pod and determine what she may have consumed for dinner that evening. Further scene investigation included photos taken of the moon flower plant that was potted and located on the front porch. A sample of the plant was recovered for the lab consisting of branches, leaves and a flower bulb, and a second sample with branches, leaves and a seed bulb. Family stated that her dinner the previous night consisted of a hot dog on bun that contained small, round black seeds. The bun was retained for the laboratory as evidence.



*Pictured left: Plant with finger pointing to missing pod*



*Pictured left: close up of branch without the pod*

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### Fatal Datura Intoxication....

Back at the lab, the seed pod from the moon flower plant was dissected and revealed seeds that were consistent with those found in the gastric contents. The small, round, black seeds on the bun were also consistent with the small, round, black seeds in the gastric contents.



*Pictured Left: Opened seed pod, and seeds from the plant*



*Pictured Right: Seeds from the gastric contents*

Analysis of the antemortem blood from the decedent did not reveal the presence of volatiles. Trazodone was identified in the antemortem blood at a level of 630 micrograms per liter (ug/L) and at 800 ug/L in the cardiac blood. Also identified in the cardiac blood were clonazepam (4.5 ug/L), 7-aminoclonazepam (57 ug/L), nordiazepam (23 ug/L), atropine (36 ug/L) and Scopolamine (36u g/L).

Datura intoxication symptoms can occur within 60 minutes and can last 24-48 hours. Ingestion is followed by classic anticholinergic syndrome. The central toxic effects include confusion, agitation anxiety, hallucinations, seizures, and coma. Peripheral toxic effects include dry mucous membranes, thirst, flushed face, blurred vision, hyperthermia, urinary retention, and decreased gut motility.

Manner of death was ruled an accident with immediate cause due to atropine and scopolamine intoxication due to Moonflower seed (Datura Species) ingestion.

References: MMWR, August 22, 2003 / 52(33);788-791