



The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>

Winter 2012

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings everyone,

It wasn't too long ago, that I gave a career talk at a local high school. I talked about some of the forensic specialties from medicolegal death investigators, to pathologists, anthropologists, entomologists, and odontologists, or other forensic scientists who may be involved in a death investigation. Eventually, a girl in the back row raised her hand and asked, "How long would I have to go to school for that?" I explained that some, such as the forensic pathologist or odontologist have doctorate level degrees with additional training as well as board certification. Medicolegal death investigators had a varied background, usually with a health profession, criminal justice, or related field background as well as specialized training courses and on the job training. But no matter what you do, you continue to learn throughout your entire professional career. And make no mistake, it is professional.

As we begin 2013, the Board of Directors is working hard on several items. Two conferences are again offered. At these we can all learn, meet our colleagues, and become better in our chosen field. We will again address the changes to the 979 legislation and meeting with Vital Records staff regarding the online death registration system.

The journalist Frank Tyger once said, "Professionalism is knowing how to do it, when to do it, and doing it." The first two parts of this definition come from training and experience. By attending conferences, talking with our colleagues, and working with other agencies do we begin to achieve these goals. Then we take our training and experience and put it into action.

I look forward to talking to you, working with you, and seeing you at the conferences in the upcoming year as we work to advance in our chosen profession.

P.J.

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Happy Holidays!!

Have an interesting or unusual case to share? Know of a special person you would like to have highlighted in an upcoming issue of the Examiner? We want to hear about them! Please send us case information or personal profiles for consideration in the upcoming publications.

Entries can be sent to:

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Racine County Medical Examiner Retires

After 41 years of dedicated and tireless service, Racine County Medical Examiner, Tom Terry, will retire at the as of December 28, 2012. Racine County Executive, Jim Ladwig, plans to appoint Tom Terry's successor by early January. Though Terry begins his retirement this December, he plans to return after the New Year to assist in training the new Medical Examiner ensuring a smooth transition.

A fully licensed funeral director and volunteer fireman/EMT for the Burlington Fire Department, Tom Terry began working as a deputy coroner for Racine County in 1971. Then Coroner, John Esayian, and Terry were instrumental in changing Racine County from coroner system to Wisconsin's first Medical Examiner system. Esayian was appointed Medical Examiner in 1972 and continued his service until 1990 when Terry was appointed his successor.



Terry states "It's time. I'm 68. Everything I've ever done in my life is 24-7, and maybe it's time to slow down now." With his wife retiring just days before him, Terry looks forward to devoting time to his family and hobbies. Terry and his wife own a year-round home in beautiful Boulder Junction where they enjoy bird watching, hunting, fishing, and relaxation. Terry has a passion and talent for wood working and firearms, with his own 100-yard firing range and workshop. If that isn't enough to keep him busy, his funeral director's license still hangs at the Derrick Funeral Home in Lake Geneva where Terry will serve as an embalmer as needed.

On Behalf of the WCMEA, Congratulations Tom Terry on your illustrious career and well deserved retirement!

Big Changes for Jackson County

September 24, 2012 marked Debora Olson's final day as Jackson County Coroner. Olson resigned after over 12 months of medical leave. In August 2011, Olson was diagnosed with a rare viral brain infection which affected her memory and motor ability. Subsequently she was unable to work, and after numerous medical tests and treatments, doctors recommend that Olson not return to her position as Coroner.



The Jackson County Chronicle quoted Olson saying, "I'm going to miss it. I really enjoyed my work there, and I loved all the people that I worked with." Debora Olson held the position of Coroner since August 2010 after Michael Quinn resigned. She was elected to a four-year term the following November.

During Debora Olson's absence, Peggy Holmgreen, Chief Deputy Coroner and pictured above, had been acting Coroner. Holmgreen is seeking appointment from Governor Scott Walker for Jackson County Coroner. The term would start immediately and will end January 4, 2015.

WCMEA Fall Conference and Annual Meeting



The 2012 Annual Training Conference was held in our beautiful capitol city, Madison, from October 8, 2012 through October 10, 2012. There were 76 attendees who enjoyed presentations from local and national names on topics related to mass casualty incidents. Detective Sergeant Edward Striedinger with the Seattle Police Department was the keynote speaker who highlighted the Green River Serial Killer.

The speaker; however, with the biggest impact was pint-sized Erica Barlament. This young lady is only eight years of age, but wise beyond her years. Erica Barlament is our Miss Junior Pre-Teen Wisconsin for 2012 and stands on a platform for organ and tissue donations. She shared her personal story of heartache and loss, while advocating the benefits of donations. Miss Barlament moved the crowd to tears and received a standing ovation.



It was announced that the 2013 Spring Conference will be held April 8 through April 10 in Kenosha County at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center. The 2013 Fall Conference and Annual Meeting will be hosted by Manitowoc County. Looking ahead to 2014.....**host counties are still needed!** If you would like to bring the conference and WCMEA to your community please notify the Board of Directors.

Many thanks to Angela Hinze, Columbia and Adams County Medical Examiner, for her hard work in making this conference a huge success. The WCMEA would also like to thank our host Dane County, the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center, as well as the many presenters, sponsors, and exhibitors for their time, hospitality and expertise.

The John Stanley Award

John Larson, Marathon County Medical Examiner, presented the “John Stanley Lifetime Achievement Award” to Peggy Peterson at the awards banquet on October 9, 2012.



Peggy Peterson, known to many as “Mom,” was honored for her untiring compassion, and years of dedicated public service for the State of Wisconsin Vital Records Department. Peterson has always gone above and beyond for Wisconsin and the WCMEA. Even in retirement, “Mom” continues to serve our association through the work of D-FIRST (Dane Fatality Incident Response Support Team).

Congratulations to Peggy Peterson on this great honor, and many thanks for all that she has done for the WCMEA and Wisconsin.

The Winner’s Circle

The WCMEA awarded two \$600 training scholarships at the Annual WCMEA Banquet on October 9, 2012. Each year scholarships are awarded to deserving WCMEA members for the purpose of receiving training in a program, course or seminar related to medicolegal death investigation. The 2012 scholarships were awarded to Amy Lyn DeMeter of Door County and Lani Crocker of Jackson County. Congratulations!



The 2012-2013 WCMEA Board of Directors

The annual meeting held on October 9, 2012 and was well-attended. WCMEA President, Al Klimek, and the 2011-2012 Board of Directors (BOD) addressed the membership and presented their respective reports. In review, WCMEA membership has increased over the last year, the new website is up and running, the association is fiscally sound, and legislation changes are coming to fruition.

The membership participation was tremendous with multiple people from all over the state expressing an interest to serve on the BOD. Elections were tight, but congratulations are in order for the following members on their newly acquired positions:

President: PJ Schoebel, Dodge County
1st Vice President: Barry Irmen, Dane County
2nd Vice President: Jennifer Schroeter, Kenosha County
Sergeant-at-Arms: Richard Schleifer, Clark County
Treasurer: Robert Kulhanek, Sheboygan County
Secretary: Laurie Parisey, Oconto County
Member-at-Large: Mary Ricci, Barron County
3-year Trustee: John Larson, Marathon County
2-year Trustee: Jay Deppe, Jefferson County
1-year Trustee: Amy DeMeter, Door County
Past President: Al Klimek, Oconto, Door and Brown Counties

Statewide Vital Records Information System – Death Registration Module



The State Vital Records Office is continuing development of the death registration module for the Statewide Vital Records Information System (SVRIS) and medical certification for death registration will become an electronic process. Coroners and medical examiners complete approximately 20% of all medical certifications for deaths records in Wisconsin and will be a major player in electronic death registration.

SVRIS is an automated, secure, web-based software application designed to process vital records from point of initial entry through registration and assignment of the state file number. All Wisconsin birthing hospitals, all Local Vital Records Offices and the State Vital Records Office currently use SVRIS for the registration of Wisconsin birth and fetal death records and for birth certificate issuance.

When death record registration becomes an electronic process, the death record will be filed online through the SVRIS website. The electronic death registration process closely mimics today's paper process. The demographic information is completed by the funeral director; the medical certification is completed by a physician or a coroner/medical examiner; the record is filed by the funeral director at the Local Vital Records Office and then the record is registered at the State Vital Records Office. Today's workflow has been incorporated into the electronic process and each death record participant accesses their work in work queues to complete their part of the process.

SVRIS will provide many advantages over the current paper process. The advantages include real-time edits, electronic amendment requests, blank and populated documents, access to standard reports, and access to view all death records that occurred in one's jurisdiction. These advantages are expected to increase accuracy and timeliness of filing death records and will also improve statistics for state and national surveillance systems.

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Death Registration Continued from Page 4

Access and use of SVRIS is free for all participants in the registration of vital events and the State Vital Records Office will provide instructor-led training at various locations throughout the state. It is expected that the State Vital Records Office will begin rolling out SVRIS sometime in the second quarter of 2013. The rollout will be a phased-in approach where different areas of Wisconsin go live at different times.

The State Vital Records Office would like to thank the Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners Association for all of their continued support as we move forward with electronic death record registration.

Michelle Smith, Death Phase Business Lead for SVRIS, State Vital Records Office

Partnering to Prevent Infant Deaths

The death of any child is a tragic event we wish no family had to face. It is unbearable for the parents and sends ripples of sorrow throughout the community. During this time of tragedy it is important for families to receive grief and bereavement services as soon as possible.



Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin (Alliance) is proud to partner with you to ensure families who experience an infant death receive the grief and bereavement services they need through our Infant Death Center, an initiative of the Alliance. We work with families throughout the first year following the death and provide local grief resources, newsletters and medical consultation by a pediatric pathologist. Your help is critical in identifying these families so we are able to connect them to services as quickly as possible. We are

asking that all medical examiners and coroners report all sudden and unexpected infant deaths as early as possible to the Infant Death Center at (414) 292-4046 or email Vivian Jackson at vjackson@chw.org.

The Alliance also leads the Wisconsin death review program, Keeping Kids Alive, which includes local child death review (CDR) and fetal infant mortality review (FIMR) teams. Wisconsin was recently awarded a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to gain a better understanding of the risk factors and circumstances surrounding the death of an infant. Wisconsin is one of nine states funded to collect risk factor data on these cases.

The goal of this work is to identify common risk factors and develop prevention strategies based on the data. Reporting infant death cases to the Infant Death Center and your participation in local CDR and FIMR team meetings is of great value and will help us meet the needs of our families and fight infant mortality. For more information on this initiative and the Alliance's work, contact Abby Collier at (414) 292-4016 or ajcollier@chw.org.

Abby Collier, Injury Prevention & Death Review Project Manager for Children's Health Alliance of WI

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Spring WCMEA Conference
 Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, Kenosha
 April 8-10, 2013

Annual WAHI Training Seminar
 "Sharpening Death Investigation Skills"
 April 23-26, 2013
 Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells

St. Louis University School of Medicine
 Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course
 January 28–February 1, 2013 at St. Louis, Missouri
www.medschool.slu.edu/mldi for more information

Free Online Forensic Training
 National Institute of Justice
www.nij.gov/training

Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....

- In **Sheboygan County**- Two 13-year old boys were charged with party to first-degree intentional homicide after using a hatchet and hammer to kill one boy's great-grandmother. The boys stole jewelry and a car from the victim's home and went out for pizza following the murder.
- In **Dane County**- A 37-year old bicyclist was struck and killed in the Town of Westport. The cyclist was riding on the paved shoulder of a county highway near the entrance to Governor Nelson State Park when the driver of a pickup truck fell asleep behind the wheel, drifted out of the travel line and struck her. The cyclist died at the scene.
- In **Eau Claire County**- Two 21-year old men died as a result of an off-campus apartment fire in Eau Claire. The men shared the apartment with two other roommates, all of whom attended UW-Eau Claire and had been friends since elementary school. The cause of the fire is still being investigated.
- In **Monroe County**- A 49-year old man was killed in a rollover crash on Interstate 90 near Sparta. The man was driving a 1996 Pontiac Grand Am when he lost control. The vehicle rolled several times before the driver was ejected and died.
- In **Brown County**- A 60-year old woman died at St. Mary's Regional Burn Center in Milwaukee from burn-related complications following a fire on Green Bay's southeast side. The woman was a tenant in the two-story apartment complex where the fire was reported. Seven other people were displaced by the fire. This marked the city's first fire fatality since 2010.
- In **Fond du Lac County**- A 60-year old man died in Kettle Moraine Lake in the Town of Osceola. The Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Office was called to a report of a boat traveling in circles on the lake without a driver on board. The man was discovered floating in the water.
- In **Waukesha County**- A 45-year old man entered the Azana Salon and Spa in Brookfield where he opened fire killing 3 women and wounding 4 others before taking his own life. The man was the estranged husband and known abuser of a spa employee. This marked the second mass shooting in southeastern Wisconsin in the last few months.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 5-year old boy died at an area hospital from severe injuries believed to be from abuse. A man and woman have since been arrested in connection with his injuries.
- In **Eau Claire County**- A 17-year old boy was fatally stabbed during a fight, and 4 others were treated and released at a local hospital. A large fight broke out in the hallway of an apartment building. Weapons in the brawl included a knife, rocks, and wooden objects. Police are holding a man who hosted a party in the apartment building in connection with the death.
- In **Columbia County**- Two women, ages 52 and 61 years, were killed and a man injured when a car and dump truck collided in the Town of Marcellon. The women were driving their car on Hwy EE and failed to stop for a stop sign at the intersection of Hwy EE and Hwy E. Consequently their car struck the dump truck, and the collision sent both vehicles into a ditch. The women died on scene, and the driver of the truck was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital for minor injuries.
- In **Marathon County**- A 50-year old male died as a result of a hunting accident. The Town of Wausau man was hunting by himself. When he did not return home, family became concerned and began searching for him. His body was found in a wooded area not far from his home. He had been shot in the jaw by the bolt of his crossbow.

DEATHS *Continued from Page 6*

- In **Dane County**- A UW-Madison student died in Smith Residence Hall following cardiac arrest. Details surrounding the death remain under investigation; police are unsure if the death was due to natural causes or a suicide.
- In **Racine County**- An 84-year old man died of traumatic injuries at his Racine home. A relative found the man unconscious in his house and called 911. He was pronounced dead at the scene and police are investigating the death as a homicide.
- In **Washington County**- A 57-year old bicyclist died as a result of injuries she sustained after being struck by a vehicle. The woman had been struck at the intersection of S. Indiana Avenue and W. Kilbourn Avenue in West Bend. She was transported to Froedtert Hospital where she died several days later. The woman was not wearing a helmet at the time of the crash. The incident remains under investigation; however, it does not appear that alcohol or drugs were a factor.
- In **Racine County**- Three children were killed, and one critically injured in a house fire. The fire started in a first-floor bathroom of the Racine home by a candle. The mother of the children was unable to help her trapped children due to excessive smoke and ran from the home to her parents' house across the street to call 911.
- In **Dane County**- A 30-year old man was killed during a struggle with police. The man had been drinking, and mistakenly entered a neighboring home. The homeowner called 911 after hearing someone inside the house. When the officer responded, the man and the homeowner were outside struggling with each other. The officer drew his gun and ordered both men to get down on the ground. The man swore at and ran toward the officer, grabbed the officer's hand and reached for the officer's gun. The officer fired three rounds.
- In **Walworth County**- An 11-year old girl was killed in a traffic accident. The girl was in the back seat of a vehicle that struck a utility pole on Highway 89 in the Town of Whitewater. The driver of the vehicle, a 17-year old girl, was not injured and the front seat passenger, also 17 years old, was transported to a local hospital for critical injuries.

Carbon Monoxide- A Silent Killer

As the seasons change once again in Wisconsin, we are cognizant of the many dangers associated with the frigid temperatures and inclement weather. One such danger is carbon monoxide.

An odorless, colorless, tasteless gas, carbon monoxide (CO) is the most common cause of fatal poisonings. Situations for CO poisoning can include malfunctioning gas-fueled furnaces or water heaters, gasoline powered generators or propane heaters used indoors, idling automobiles in enclosed garages, and simply allowing children to ride inside enclosed truck beds. Approximately 50% of all CO poisonings occur within the home, with December and January yielding the highest number of incidents.

Carbon monoxide is toxic to all aerobic forms of life. Like other substances, tolerance levels to CO is dependent on people and populations and therefore signs and symptoms may vary. Generally speaking, a low level exposure can produce symptoms of headache, dizziness, fatigue, confusion, and shortness of breath. With a higher level exposure, symptoms may include severe headaches, weakness, dizziness, nausea, irregular heartbeat and unconsciousness. At very high levels of exposure, CO can cause seizures, respiratory failure and death.

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Carbon Monoxide Continued

As death investigators, familiarizing ourselves with the signs and symptoms of an exposure as well as understanding what to look for in the field are extremely important. What is sometimes taken for granted; however, is our own personal safety. The following case example highlights the potential for danger:

In January 2012, Kenosha County officials were dispatched to a local residence where a man had been found deceased in his bed. The man lived alone, but had lunch every Sunday with his neighbor. When the man failed to arrive for lunch, the neighbor entered his residence, found him unresponsive, and called 911.

Deputy Medical Examiner Ana Melendez responded to the residence, and when she entered the home, was overcome by the strong odor of car exhaust. Deputy Melendez immediately directed everyone outside. She opened the windows throughout the residence and went into the attached garage where the decedent's car was running, which according to friends and family, was commonplace for the decedent. Deputy Melendez opened the garage door and contacted the fire department to again request their assistance. When rescue personnel returned, a carbon monoxide reading was obtained of 420 ppm. The fire department transported the deputy sheriff to a local hospital for treatment of carbon monoxide poisoning. The family and neighbors of the decedent refused medical treatment.



It was over 60 minutes before Deputy Melendez was given clearance to again enter the residence and complete her investigation. Following an autopsy, it was determined that the decedent died from acute carbon monoxide poisoning.

Thanks to Deputy Melendez, her quick thinking, and sharp investigation, the tragedy was limited. Recognizing the need for personal safety, the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office has since provided each deputy medical examiner with a carbon monoxide reader.