



The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>



Winter 2010



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to start by wishing each of you Happy Holidays and for many of you happy re-election (or election). Coming from the Medical Examiner side of the profession I have never had to raise money, pound yard signs, and shake hands in order to keep my job, so I applaud your commitment to your community. I know that the Coroner vs. Medical Examiner system is often debated, as each has its merits. However, when it comes right down to it, we all strive for the same things - truth, justice, accuracy and cooperation. For this we should be proud!

As fall has turned to winter, the WCMEA has been more idle than usual at this time of the year. Usually we would be gearing up for our winter conference in January, but because of our decision to shake things up a bit by moving the conferences to a spring and fall format, we will have to wait a couple of extra months to gather as a group. Nevertheless, I for one am looking forward to coming together to share knowledge, experience, and friendship. I find it most important to speak of our ongoing education when I give presentations in my communities. Many professional groups do not offer this.

Your Board of Directors (BOD) will be meeting sometime in January for our

quarterly meeting (date to be announced).

It will be held in Wisconsin Rapids which is the site of the next conference. Each of you is encouraged to attend if you would like. Understanding that this is not always possible or practical for that matter, you may still have your concerns addressed by submitting them to a member of the BOD. If you don't know who they are please go to our web site for a complete listing (www.wcmea.com). I promise you that any concern that you have will be placed on the agenda and discussed. Your input is important, as that is the only way that we can continue to improve our association.

Have a safe and joyous holiday,
Al Klimek



Keeping Kids Alive Through Prevention: 2010 Child Death Review Summit

On November 11th and 12th, over 120 participants attended the 2010 Child Death Review (CDR) Summit in the Wisconsin Dells. The Summit focused on identifying prevention opportunities, writing prevention recommendations, and maintaining an effective review team. Keynote speaker, Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, spoke about the principles of injury prevention and provided practical examples of how CDR teams can make a difference in their local communities.

Additionally, the first report highlighting data collected by local CDR teams was unveiled. This report titled *A Window into Prevention: An initial report on prevention child death and injury in Wisconsin* focuses on the top causes of death, common risk factors, and prevention strategies that have been proven effective in other communities. The report can be viewed at <http://www.chawisconsin.org/Preventinjury/resources.htm#Reports>.

The Summit is a yearly opportunity for all CDR teams in Wisconsin to come together to network and revive training. Presentations from the Summit are located on the Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin webpage <http://www.chawisconsin.org/cdrLocal.htm>.

CDR teams bring tremendous value to their local communities by identifying risk factors and circumstances surrounding the death of a child. Currently, there are 26 local CDR teams reviewing cases in Wisconsin. Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin provides training, resources, and technical assistance to local CDR teams. To learn more about implementing a CDR team in your community contact Abby Collier, CDR project manager at ajcollier@chw.org or 414-292-4016.

Submitted by Abby Collier

Peggy Peterson Retires From State Vital Records Department

November 19, 2010 marked the end of an era for Wisconsin and the WCMEA . . . Peggy Peterson worked her final day in the State Vital Records Department. After 35+ years of service, Peterson, fondly known as "Mom," has decided to join her husband in retirement. Though she will no longer hold her post in Vital Records, Peggy plans to keep busy with travel, volunteer work, and quality time with family and friends . . .

just in time for the holidays. Peterson has been a fixture for so many with her patience, knowledge, and availability. Nobody deserves this kind of opportunity more. Congratulations and best wishes Mom from all of us in the WCMEA!



The Results Are In!



With high voter turnout across the state and nationwide, the November 2, 2010 election proved to be historic. The sudden shift in political dominance grabbed the headlines throughout the nation. Highlighted below are results from some of the coroner races throughout Wisconsin that grabbed local headlines and the attention of the WCMEA. Congratulations to all candidates, old and new!

- Wood County coroner, **Garry Kronstedt**, won another four-year term after defeating Dara Borre Hamm.
- Winnebago County Coroner, **Barry Busby**, defeated Don Hunke for another term.
- **Curtis Green**, Mantiwoc County Coroner, won another term as coroner with no opponent.
- **Ron Patten**, won the September primary in Chippewa County, and was unchallenged for the November election. Patten replaces Katherine Gerrits.
- **Karen Baker** won the coroner race in Washburn County with no opponent.
- **Kristen Haase** won the coroner's race in Green County replacing Jan Perry.
- **Jenifer Keach** of Rock County won another four-year term in Rock County despite a referendum voted on by residents for an appointed medical examiner. Any changes toward a medical examiner system will not take place until 2014.
- **Kathy Kohutko** of Juneau County won the coroner race without a challenger.
- **Barbara Beeksma** and **Gary Victorson** each won another term as coroner for Ashland and Bayfield Counties respectively.
- **Greg Hahn** was victorious for the coroner seat in Sauk County replacing Betty Hinze.
- Clark County voters granted **Richard Schleifer** another term.
- **Joe Morovits** defeated Patricia Nimbar in Crawford County for another term.
- **Patrick Theder**, **William Finley**, **Diane Simonich**, and **Virginia Douglas** each won another term for their respective counties of Jefferson, Iowa, Iron, and Lafayette.
- **Deb Olson** was declared the winner in Jackson County replacing Michael Quinn.
- Lincoln County Coroner, **Paul Proulx**, remains in position for another term.
- In Price County, **James Dalbesio III** won another term as coroner after defeating Kylee Baratka.
- **David Dokkestul** took over as Sawyer County Coroner following the death of Dr. John Ryan and was elected for another term.
- The following incumbent coroners won their county elections hands-down: **George Smith** (Marinette), **Thomas Wastart II** (Marquette), **Ruth Wulgaert** (Outagamie), **Scott Rifleman** (Portage), **Marcus "Mike" Jesse** (Shawano), **David Leffin** (Sheboygan), **Bonnie Kindschy** (Trempealeau), **John Griebel** (Walworth), and **Barry Tomaras** (Waupaca).

Interesting cases handled by Wisconsin's death investigators.....compiled by Jon Hagen

- In Sauk County, a 51-year-old man died when his experimental airplane came apart in flight shortly after taking off from the Sauk Prairie Airport.
- In Dane County, authorities recovered the body of a 40-year-old man from a lake.
- In Green Lake County, an 82-year-old man and a 77-year-old woman died when they pulled out in front of a semi.
- In Racine, a 39-year-old man was shot to death and a 29-year-old man was seriously injured in a shooting at a carryout restaurant; a 23-year-old man was arrested.
- In Racine, a 26-year-old woman was found dead; authorities believe the death is drug-related. Her former boyfriend is facing a variety of charges.
- In Walworth County, the bodies of two humans, along with several animals, were found inside a mobile home which recently had its electricity shut off. A gas generator was found inside the trailer. The pair was a 46-year-old man and his daughter, 18. Carbon monoxide poisoning was suspected.
- In Milwaukee, a 55-year-old man was stabbed to death; his 47-year-old lady friend was charged in the case.
- In Brown County, a 41-year-old man died after being hit by a car while crossing a Green Bay street; a 42-year-old woman was arrested, suspected of being intoxicated.
- In Brown County, a 31-year-old man died when he apparently fell out of his boat while duck hunting.
- In Dodgeville, a 45-year-old woman died of injuries sustained when she was hit by a car while crossing a street; she was hit by a woman, 58.
- In Dodge County, a 79-year-old man died of injuries sustained after he turned in front of an oncoming vehicle.
- In Portage County, a body was found inside a burning vehicle which had left the roadway and hit a tree.
- In Milwaukee, a 55-year-old woman died after being hit by a dump truck while crossing a city street. The truck had the right-of-way; the woman was walking against the crossing light.
- In Dane County, a 26-year-old man died when a natural gas leak caused his house to explode. Two others were injured.
- In Sauk County, a man died when his pick-up truck left the roadway and rolled multiple times, ejecting him in the process.
- In Milwaukee, a 26-year-old man was shot and killed during a robbery attempt.
- In Kenosha County, a 56-year-old woman died when another vehicle crossed the center line and struck her car head-on; the other driver, a 23-year-old woman, was injured.
- In Oconto County, a 64-year-old bicyclist died after he was struck by a car. The cyclist was hit at night, and was wearing dark clothing; he also did not have any lights or reflectors on his bike.
- Wisconsin reported that 7 bicyclists were killed in 2009; so far 10 have died in 2010.
- In Taylor County, a 46-year-old woman died after she was thrown from a horse that bucked when a car passed.
- In Milwaukee County, a man was shot and killed by police. The police had been called to the home by the man's girlfriend due to domestic abuse.

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- In Bayfield County, two drivers, ages 62 and 70, died and a passenger was injured in a crash on icy roads during an early-season snowstorm.
- In Waukesha County, a man killed himself when he was pulled over on a traffic stop.
- In Columbia County, a man was shot to death by sheriff's deputies. They wanted to talk to the man about outstanding felony warrants for sexual abuse of a child.
- The Wisconsin Child Death Review Council reported that 1556 children died in Wisconsin in 2007 and 2008; the group believes that 25% of those deaths were preventable. The top five causes were motor vehicle accidents, asphyxia, homicide, drowning and poisoning. The study showed that 308 deaths were accidental, 63 were homicides and 31 were suicides.
- A study showed that smokers who quit in Madison and Milwaukee gained about 10 pounds each on the average, but increases in "good" cholesterol were beneficial in reducing risks of death due to heart disease and stroke.
- In Dodge County, a 45-year-old inmate died after hanging himself with a bedsheet at the Dodge County jail. This is the first suicide there since the jail opened in 2001.
- In West Allis, a man and woman were found dead inside their home; murder-suicide was suspected. A child, age 3, was found unharmed in the residence.
- In Waukesha County, a 54-year-old man collapsed and died as he crossed the finish line in a 5k run/walk, sponsored by a church.
- In Shawano County, the body of a 77-year-old man was found inside his burning house.
- In Columbia County, a man was convicted of murder in a cold case that was 30 years old. The man killed a woman, 18, who was the wife of his friend from high school. DNA advances helped to solve the case. Her body was discovered when her husband returned home after working a night shift. A 3-month-old infant in the apartment was not harmed.
- In Milwaukee County, an 8-year-old boy died in a crash. The driver of the car, the boy's stepfather, ran from the scene to a house, where he was arrested by authorities after a stand-off. Tragically, the boy's mother died a couple of weeks later when the car she was driving in Michigan crashed into a tree. Police believe she had been drinking before the crash. An open whiskey bottle was found in her car.
- In Milwaukee, a 22-year-old man was shot and killed during an altercation outside a club; a 25-year-old man, who was also shot, was arrested in the case.
- In Calumet County, a 19-year-old man died when his car, estimated to be traveling at least 100 mph, hit a tree.
- In Shawano County, a 4-year-old boy fell ill at a daycare center and died a few days later of Strep pneumonia.
- In Dane County, a 56-year-old woman died after she was struck by a car.
- In Waupaca County, a 26-year-old man was convicted of hit-and-run vehicular homicide in a 2004 case. A man, 20, was struck from behind and the body moved into the ditch. The convicted man still faces charges in a case from last winter where he allegedly stole a snowmobile and ran down several deer.
- In Milwaukee, a 26-year-old man was shot to death by his cousin's boyfriend during a robbery.
- In Milwaukee, a 33 year-old man died, when his co-workers threw a refrigerator off of a building that was undergoing renovations.

Depression and the Holidays

As the season changes again, Wisconsin transforms into a winter wonderland. With the holiday lights and Christmas carols all around, it is easy to get caught up in the magic of the holidays. Unfortunately, for many, the winter season is anything but merry.

Each year, come late fall and winter, as many as 6 out of every 100 people throughout North America suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) or seasonal depression. It is most common in young adult women, though it can affect men and women of all ages. SAD tends to be more prevalent in the northern portions of the country versus the south.

Though the exact causes of SAD are unknown; the symptoms mirror those of other types of depression including (but not limited to) fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, poor concentration, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. The symptoms of seasonal depression return every year around the same time. If left untreated, SAD can become more severe and have devastating effects on a person's life. The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) recently published their most recent statistics. In 2007, 34,598 suicides occurred in the United States . . . that translates to 1 suicide every 15.2 minutes. The AAS reported that there is a relationship between depression and suicide. The suicide risk increases by more than 50 percent in depressed individuals. The research suggests that approximately 60 percent of suicides are committed by someone who suffered from depression.

Learning and recognizing the warning signs and symptoms of depression are the first step in prevention. There are treatment options available ranging from lifestyle changes and medications to support groups and counseling.

For more information, please visit the AAS website: www.suicidology.org



Wedding Bells are Ringing



Patrice Plungis, Deputy Medical Examiner for Waukesha County and Editor of the *The Examiner*, wed her soul mate, Alex Hall on October 30, 2010. The happy couple exchanged their vows in front of family and friends at the Milwaukee County War Memorial overlooking beautiful Lake Michigan. On behalf of the WCMEA, I extend my congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Hall! We wish you a lifetime of good fortune.

Special Delivery

Deputy medical examiner Andrea Sorce with Waukesha County has welcomed a new baby boy into the world. On June 24, 2010, Andrea and her husband Vito, a detective with the Menomonee Falls Police Department, delivered their son in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This is their first child. Congratulations to Andrea and Vito Sorce on their special delivery!



Compassion Fatigue: Prevention and Intervention

You might have heard the term “compassion fatigue,” but what does it mean and whom does it affect? Compassion fatigue is a term that describes the exhaustion; emotional, spiritual, and physical, that one experiences after providing significant energy, compassion, and care to others over time. It can develop from a wide variety of sources; however, is most common in those who work in caring-type professions. Though health care workers, clergymen, and mental health care workers are among the most common professionals at risk, it can affect anyone in any type of setting. Though we are not considered health care professionals, we do deal with death and dying on a daily basis. Some cases might affect you more than others. You might have personal issues that you are balancing with your professional life.

Compassion fatigue is a chronic condition, which is easier to prevent than to treat. If you recognize the feelings of exhaustion or “burn-out,” it is important to acknowledge that it may be compassion fatigue. Something as simple as a vacation can be a good way to restore and refocus your energy. Maintaining a healthy balance of diet and exercise is a wonderful way to tend to your physical and emotional needs. Nurturing friendship and keeping strong family ties, are especially important. Even something as simple as refraining from reading the newspaper or watching the news coverage can help rejuvenate your emotional and spiritual health.

You have an important job to do, but it is equally important to take care of you. If you have questions, or would like to learn more about compassion fatigue, please visit www.pspinformation.com or www.proqol.org.

Training Opportunities...

Medicolegal Investigation of Death, presented by Wayne State University, School of Medicine.

May 4-6, 2011, in Dearborn, Michigan. For more information e-mail dcme@med.wayne.edu or visit www.med.wayne.edu/cme/mid

Investigative Photography

January 4- 7, 2011. Basic Bloodstain Pattern Analysis Course. Contact Jessica Heimann (920) 735-4773 heimann@fvtc.edu Classes are at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, WI.

National Association of Medical Examiner's 45th Anniversary Meeting, August 6-13, 2011. Alaska Cruise with several ports of call. For more information please visit www.thename.org

Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course– St. Louis University, School of Medicine. Course dates– January 10-14, 2011, March 14-18, 2011 and

August 15-19, 2011. For more information go to:

<http://medschool.slu.edu/mldi/>

Basic & Advanced Training in the Medicolegal Investigation of Death. Hosted by the New York City's Office of the Medical Examiner and funded by the National Institute of Justice.

Multiple dates in 2011. Email Barbara Butcher at BButcher@ocme.nyc.gov or

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocme/html/training/courses.html>

2011 Wisconsin Coroner's and Medical Examiner's Conference. April 3-6, 2011. Mead Hotel, Wisconsin Rapids, WI. Contact Angela Hinze for more information:

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU AND YOURS

And as always, please forward any entries for future publications to:

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