



The Examiner

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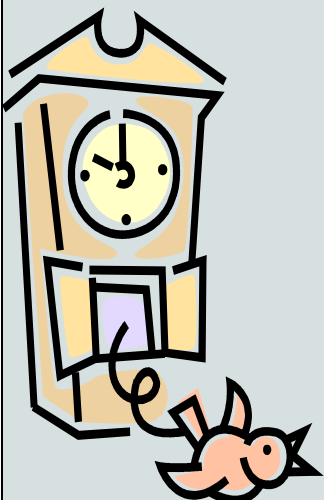
Spring 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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As I sit down to write this and look at my desk calendar I see that spring is almost here. The radio weatherman, however, is warning me that here on the shores of the Horicon Marsh to expect another couple inches of snow yet again tonight. Ah, the joys of living and working in Wisconsin. I guess the hat and gloves will have to stay in the ME van for a while yet. Still, 2013 is moving by so fast, I can't believe that it's already March.

Over the last few months, I've talked to quite a few of you as well as people from the different agencies that we work with including the organ & tissue donation agencies, Children's Health Alliance, Department of Health Services, and law enforcement just to name a few.

And since I'm talking to quite a few people, I was asked to pass on a couple of messages that might benefit us all. The first was about tox at the State Lab. If you have questions about your sample, contact the lab before your deadline approaches and explain your problem. Laura at the lab is easy to talk to and can help you. There may have been some confusion also in which Michelle or Jane at the Department of Health Services were getting called. It's nice to chat with both of them and I haven't found a death certificate question that stumps them yet (though it's not for a lack of trying), but they are two totally separate agencies.

We've hired Lenzendorf Winters & Associates to work as the lobbying firm to help us with the changes to the 979 legislation. We've spoken with them several times already and they're dedicated and working hard to helping the Association move forward.

The spring conference is being held in Kenosha April 8-10. If you haven't already registered, I would encourage you to do so soon. Excellent speakers and topics are on the slate. Vital records will be on hand to give hands on training with the new on-line Death Certificate system. You can hear from our lobbyists and the 979 legislation, participate in a round table discussion, listen to talks about topics in death investigation, pathology, toxicology, organ donation, and hear from Oak Creek officers about the Sikh Temple shooting in that community.

If the first part of the year's any indication, the next part of the year will be just as eventful. I hope to see you at the conference.

PJ

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Classification of Infant Deaths

The death of an infant is always tragic, and worthy of careful investigation and review because of the potential legal, social, and medical ramifications. In my hospital-based practice, most neonatal and infant deaths are the result of complications of prematurity or congenital malformations. The manners of these deaths are almost always natural, and the causes are easily ascertainable following review of the clinical course and a complete autopsy. The more difficult cases are infant deaths occurring at home, often while sleeping and, in roughly 20% of cases, in an unsafe sleep environment. These deaths can be due to trauma/abuse, undetected underlying illness or congenital disease, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS); distinguishing between these etiologies requires an extensive workup and may not even always be possible.



A crucial step in all infant death investigations is the interview of caregivers and witnesses. This process is best handled by a trained individual who can balance consideration of the family members' grief with the need to obtain complete and accurate information while memories are still fresh. The interviews should also mesh with the scene investigation by including doll reenactments where the responsible caregivers are asked to, as best they can, arrange a doll and the sleep environment as they were when the baby was put to sleep as well as when the death was discovered. It is important to include all the sleep-related items – blankets, toys, bottles, etc. – in the recreation as this often helps identify unsafe sleep practices that may have played a contributing role in the infant's death. Photographic documentation is essential. The investigation should also involve an overview of the entire home, assessing the overall state of cleanliness and safety, the amount of formula or food on hand, and the location and state of cribs and "pack and plays". Both infant and maternal health histories should be thoroughly reviewed to exclude any potential occult illnesses that may have predisposed to sudden death.

The autopsy in a case of infant death should include full body x-rays ("babygrams") to exclude trauma or underlying metabolic disease with skeletal manifestations, metabolic testing (especially in cases where newborn screening was not done), and archiving of blood or tissue samples as a potential source of DNA for future studies. Toxicology should be performed on the baby and, in some cases, bottles of formula or mother's milk given prior to death. Microbiologic cultures are also usually prudent.

Once all this information has been collected, cause and manner are assigned. In cases of medical disease, this is usually straightforward; but SIDS is a diagnosis of exclusion and other potential causes must have been ruled out. An NICHHD consensus statement defines SIDS as "the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history."

For SIDS-type deaths the system proposed by Krous and colleagues in 2004 is recommended. This classification uses four categories:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 1A | Classic SIDS features present and completely documented |
| 1B | Classic SIDS features present and completely documented |
| 2 | Case lacking one or more classic SIDS features |
| Unclassified | Undetermined, including cases without autopsies |

Continued on Page 3

Infant Deaths...cont'd from Page 2

Thus, cases with babies < 21 days old, perinatal illness not totally resolved, or with incomplete workups would not qualify as category 1A deaths. Importantly, any case where the infant is found in an unsafe sleep environment should be classified as SIDS, Category II; the death certificate should list "unsafe sleep environment" in "Part II, Other Significant Conditions."

Terms like SUDI and SUDC do not have formal definitions and should not be used.

Standardizing the approach to classifying infant deaths reaps many benefits. First, it better allows public health researchers, often working through Child Death or Fetal & Infant Mortality Review teams, to better determine trends and incidences of these deaths. It helps better frame any potential caregiver guilt or public outcry about the circumstances of an infant death. Most importantly, it helps families better understand whether this was a tragic unexplained occurrence, an unfortunate accident that could have been prevented with proper measures, or an underlying health problem that might potentially afflict future pregnancies. Performing complete and expert investigations and properly classifying infant deaths will thus help promote public health at both the individual and societal levels.

***Note: This article is derived in part from a presentation given at the 2012 WCMEA April Conference by Dr. Jarzembowski and Dr. Brian Peterson, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner*

Jason Jarzembowski, MD, PhD

Program Director, Perinatal Pathology, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

Racine Welcomes New Medical Examiner

On Wednesday, January 2, 2013 Jim Ladwig, Racine County Executive, announced that Michael Payne is the newly appointed Medical Examiner. Payne began his new position on the first of the year following the retirement of Tom Terry.



Payne has tirelessly served Racine County for decades having worked for the Racine County Medical Examiner's Office for over two years as a deputy medical examiner, served on the Racine Police Department for 30 years, and taught Police Science at Gateway Technical College. With his knowledge and background he brings strength and continued dedication to the Medical Examiner's Office.

As he begins his new career, Payne looks forward to maintaining the integrity and professionalism set forth by his predecessor, while making strides to modernize the office. He plans to implement efficient tracking and data management in regards to caseload, and is hopeful to begin development of new office space to accommodate the growing needs of the office and community.

On Behalf of the WCMEA, Congratulations to Mike Payne on his appointment as Medical Examiner!

Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....

- In **Outagamie County**- An 89-year old man was found dead in a private pond in Center, a small town north of Appleton. The man drowned after his ATV plunged through the ice. Authorities think the man was clearing snow from the frozen pond for recreational purposes.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 30-year old Wauwatosa police officer was shot and killed when she emerged from a break at the Wauwatosa Fire Department station. The officer's husband has been charged with the shooting death after admitting to authorities he had been stalking her for days prior to the incident.
- In **Kenosha County**- A 20-year old man was killed when his vehicle slid across the Union Pacific railroad tracks and into the path of an Amtrak train. There were 89 passengers on the train with three crew members. No one on the train was injured, and buses were brought in to remove the passengers.
- In **Racine County**- A 21-year old woman was found dead in a house fire in Mount Pleasant. The husband has since been charged with first degree intentional homicide. The man admitted to authorities that he strangled the woman in the midst of an argument. When he unsuccessfully attempted to revive her, he became so distraught and attempted to set himself on fire. In the process, the house was set ablaze.
- In **Dane County**- A 20-year old man was beaten with a baseball bat in Mount Horeb. He was transported to a local hospital where he died days later.
- In **La Crosse County**- A 54-year old homeless man was found dead in a yard. Hypothermia coupled with alcohol (BAC 0.31) killed the man. There were no signs of foul play.
- In **Trempealeau County**- A pedestrian was struck and killed by a vehicle in Independence. The victim was transported to Tri-County Hospital where she later died. Alcohol did not appear to be a factor in the crash.
- In **Rusk County**- A woman was shot and killed by her husband. The 66-year old man told police that he shot his wife once in the side while she was on the phone with police, saying that he did not believe the weapon was loaded and only wanted to scare her. He then reloaded the .22 caliber rifle and shot her in the head. The man has pled not guilty.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 7-day old infant boy died in an apartment on Milwaukee's northwest side after sleeping with his mother on a couch.
- In **Calumet County**- A man's body was found buried beneath straw at a dairy farm southwest of Chilton. Individuals on the farm contacted police when they discovered the body in a straw mow (a part of the barn where hay is stored). It appeared as though the man was moving straw when it collapsed on top of him. It was unknown how long the man was buried.
- In **Dane County**- A 31-year old woman, an epidemiologist for the State Division of Public Health, was found slain in her Madison apartment. The woman's estranged husband was later found dead of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound at his home. Police believed this was a domestic-related murder-suicide.
- In **Monroe County**- An 18-year old man died after he was struck by a train. A train operator did CPR on the man after he was hit before paramedics took over and transported him to a local hospital where he later died. No criminal activity is suspected.
- In **Calumet County**- A 31-year old woman was found dead in an ice shanty on Lake Winnebago as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning.

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Interesting deaths, continued

- In **Monroe County**- A two-vehicle crash on an icy Highway 16 claimed the lives of a 49-year old woman and her 8-month old grandson. The infant was riding in an out-of-date car seat that was improperly installed so that the infant was facing forward.
- In **Green Lake County**- A 66-year old female died in a house fire at her Princeton home. The woman was the sole resident of the home. An autopsy determined that intensive thermal injuries and inhalation of smoke and hot gases were the cause of death.
- In **Rock County**- A 59-year old woman was shot and killed in a barn on her property. The 75-year old neighbor and suspect, was found with a self-inflicted gunshot wound in another outbuilding on the property. The man was taken to US Hospital in Madison where he remained under guard and in stable condition.
- In **Ashland County**- Two Wisconsin men lost their lives in the icy waters of Lake Superior near Madeline Island. The men were seen leaving Bayfield for the island on snowmobile, and were reported missing 12 hours later. One man was found just south of the island on the edge of open water and was pronounced at the scene. The other man was found dead in the water hours later.
- In **Sheboygan County**- A 76-year old woman was found guilty in the 1957 death of her infant daughter. She was charged in 2011 with second-degree murder following an investigation prompted by one of the woman's surviving children. The death was initially ruled an accident after the woman had told police her daughter had fallen from a sofa and hit her head.
- In **Door County**- a 13-year old boy died as a result of a crash. He was riding a snowmobile on a designated trail when he tried to cross the road. His snowmobile was struck by an oncoming truck. The boy was taken to St. Vincent Hospital in Green Bay where he later died.
- In **Brown County**- A man died as a result of a farming accident. Officials reported that a section of a payloader came down on the man; he was pronounced dead at the scene. No one else was injured in the accident.
- In **Adams County**- A 27-year old woman was shot and killed by her boyfriend. The suspect told dispatchers that he was asleep in his bed when his girlfriend startled him, and he shot her with a shotgun he kept near the bed. The woman was pronounced dead at the scene. The suspect is being held on suspicion of first-degree reckless homicide.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 54-year old man died after apparently falling or jumping from a fifth-floor window at an apartment building on Milwaukee's north side. The man was transported to Froedtert Hospital where he died several hours later.
- In **Rock County**- A 47-year old man died after the snowmobile he was riding on plunged into Lake Koshkonnong. The driver of the snowmobile walked into a tavern to report that the snowmobile he was driving plunged into the lake and his passenger was still missing. Authorities found the passenger approximately 2 hours later 300-400 yards offshore and unresponsive. The man was transported to a local hospital where he later died. The men reportedly became disoriented due to darkness and fog and traveled into an area of open water.
- In **Waukesha County**- A 54-year old woman was struck and killed after exiting her disabled vehicle on Interstate 43 in New Berlin. According to authorities, the woman left her vehicle on the shoulder and was walking across the roadway when she was struck by a vehicle. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

Wisconsin Coroner/Medical Examiner Jurisdiction

| Circumstances of Death | The County With Jurisdiction |
|---|--|
| Decedent sustains an injury in Wisconsin county A and dies at the scene. | County A |
| Decedent sustains an injury in Wisconsin county A and is transported to a hospital in Wisconsin county B. | County A |
| Decedent sustains an injury in another state and is transported to a hospital in Wisconsin county A and dies there. | County A. CMEs from other states cannot sign Wisconsin death records. Decisions on the scope of the post-mortem investigation may be made jointly with authorities in the other state. |
| Decedent sustains an injury in Wisconsin county A and is transported to a hospital in another state and dies there. | Out of State County. Wisconsin CMEs cannot sign an out of state death record. Decisions on the scope of the post-mortem investigation may be made jointly with authorities in the other state. |
| Decedent collapses suddenly and unexpectedly in Wisconsin county A and is transported to a hospital in Wisconsin county B and is DOA there. The manner of death is natural. | County A. But county A may relinquish jurisdiction to County B if the situation is such that no scene investigation is required. |
| Decedent collapses suddenly and unexpectedly in Wisconsin county A and is transported to a hospital in another state and is DOA there. | Out of State County. Wisconsin CMEs cannot sign an out of state death record. Decisions on the scope of the post-mortem investigation may be made jointly with authorities in the other state. |
| Decedent collapses suddenly and unexpectedly in another state and is transported to a hospital in Wisconsin county A and is DOA there. | County A. CMEs from other states cannot sign Wisconsin death records. An out of state doctor who does not have a license to practice in Wisconsin cannot sign Wisconsin death records, either. Decisions on the scope of the post-mortem investigation may be made jointly with authorities in the other state. |
| Decedent collapses suddenly and unexpectedly in Wisconsin county A and is transported to a hospital in Wisconsin county B and dies there within 24 hours of admittance. The manner of death is natural. | County A has original jurisdiction (if that county has rules about reporting deaths within 24 hours of admittance) but the death record could be signed by a physician or by the CME in county B. |
| Decedent collapses suddenly and unexpectedly in Wisconsin county A and is transported to a hospital in another state and dies there within 24 hours of admittance. The cause of death is natural. | Out of State County. Wisconsin CMEs cannot sign an out of state death record. The out of state Coroner/M.E. may not even be called. |
| A body is found in Wisconsin county A and the county of injury is unknown | County A (for signing the death record). Even if Wisconsin county B is found later to be the county of injury. |



Wisconsin Coroner's and Medical Examiner's Association

Registration Form April 2013 Annual Conference in Kenosha, WI - Conference Dates April 8, 9, &10

Name & Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: State: ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

FAX: _____

Email: _____

Fee: Full Conference

_____ \$225.00 Member

_____ \$250.00 Non-Member

Single Day: Circle Day You Wish to Attend: Monday or Tuesday

\$100.00 Member \$125.00 Non-Member

I WILL ATTEND THE BOD MEETING SUNDAY EVENING: _____

The conference is being held at: Kenosha Radisson Hotel and Conference Center 11800 108th Street Pleasant Prairie, WI 53158

***NOTE: The WCMEA has a block of rooms reserved for the conference. Please call 262-857-3377 to reserve a room from the block at a Government rate of \$70.00. Reservations need to be made **NO LATER THAN MARCH 25, 2013**. After that date, the block of rooms will be released and there is not guarantee that a room will be available.

C/o Robert Kulhanek, Treasurer

2422 N. 7th St., Sheboygan, WI 53083 Make checks payable to: WCMEA *Registration deadline is April 1, 2013*****

A \$25 fee will be charged for late registrations. No refunds for cancellations after April 1, 2013
For additional questions, please contact: Barry Irmén at irmen@countyofdane.com

Patrice Hall & Jennifer Schroeter
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Kenosha, WI 53143
(262) 653-3869

DID YOU KNOW...

Death is defined in the Wisconsin State Statutes

146.71 Determination of death.

An individual who has sustained either irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions or irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, is dead. A determination of death shall be made in accordance with accepted medical standards.

LET YOUR TALENT SHINE!



The Examiner is looking for interesting case investigations, as well as special WCMEA members to highlight in the summer publication. Please submit your case reports or personal entries to editors Patrice Hall or Jennifer Schroeter by **May 17, 2013.**

Forward submissions via e-mail:

patrice.hall@kenoshacounty.org

jennifer.schroeter@kenoshacounty.org

Or via USPS to:

**Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office
8600 Sheridan Road; Kenosha, WI 53143**