



The National Association of Medical Examiners®

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On behalf of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), we would like to express our support for the new forensics initiative and offer our expertise in assisting with the gathering of data for the country's medico-legal death investigation needs. As we stand ready to assist, as always, we must unfortunately acknowledge that we have long had shortages in our community documented by the National Forensic Science Commission. The opioid crisis has caused us to reach a crisis level. In fact, the US currently has less than one half of the forensic pathologists needed to adequately serve the population.

As you know, forensic science is very broad with much cross-over between disciplines. Collaboration between disciplines has proven successful with respect to the public service and outcome measures. Forensics is not limited to only crime-laboratory based disciplines and should reflect the diversity of forensic practice. Our subspecialty, forensic pathology, plays a critical role in the justice system. Training and resources are necessary to insure precise and accurate forensic diagnoses to serve the victim, next of kin, and the public as well as national databases collating information on diseases, cause of death, and manner of death. Only by such study can injury and disease be diagnosed, documented, and ultimately, prevented. We want to strengthen collaborations between the Department of Justice, Federal, State, and Local providers of all forensic sciences including forensic pathology.

Issues such as medical school exposure to forensic pathology, student loan forgiveness, funding of forensic pathology training programs, and other critical resources need to be promptly addressed.

Medicolegal death investigation is at a cross roads and is eager to work with the Attorney General to address the following urgent matters. As is evident by the opioid crisis, human bodies cannot be backlogged. The deceased victim is our patient, not just a specimen with a number.

Brian L. Peterson, M.D.
NAME President, 2017