



Pathology Biology Section – 2003

G27 Computerization of the Autopsy Report “How to Build Your Own Desktop”

Coleen Crawford, MFA*, and William M. Zane, MD, OCME Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 720 Albany Street, Boston, MA

Upon completion of this presentation, attendees will understand integration of the major components of the case file as well as how current software and computer technologies allow for a personalized desktop application that increases the productivity of the forensic pathologist and support staff.

Goals of Poster: The goals of the poster are to show the stages of development of a case file on the computer screen. The authors will create case specific folders and subfolders or nests of files and incorporate them into “Palettes.” Those portions of a case file the pathologist reviews most often, i.e., the diagrams, dictated report and images are made available by clicking icons that represent specific documents, digital images or drawings. In this presentation the files and icons have been chosen to meet the needs of a particular doctor. Other doctors may want different files immediately available and this presentation will show how he or she can create their own computerized case file.

Method: Flash, a *Macromedia* software program is first used to create an interface or form that will contain the palettes. Flash works with many types of media and allows the user to create his or her own case file, linked to a database of multiple file types.

First anatomy diagrams used in the autopsy room are scanned and then enhanced by using common drawing software such as *Adobe Illustrator*. The illustrations are then saved as JPEG, EPS, or PDF files in a folder. Icons of each diagram are created and organized within a palette. These diagrams or templates are now available for printing as a hard copy for use in the autopsy room or enhanced with additional icons symbolic of lesions.

The next step involves providing diagrams that show the sites of trauma for police and attorneys. A palette is designed with icons representing gunshot wound entrances, exits as well as abrasions, lacerations and sharp force injuries. Using simple drag and drop motions, the pathologist chooses an icon and places a small rendition of the lesion on a template, creating a simple and accurate diagram of the findings. These diagrams can then be printed as hard copy or attached to e-mail messages.

A third palette is created with dictation templates created in *Microsoft WORD* and saved in a folder. Icons of each template are inserted into a new palette. The appropriate template is opened and the autopsy report is dictated. A transcriptionist can then cut and paste the text into the office format.

Next a palette with icons representing digital images is added. Thumbnails of a particular case’s digital images are called up from the physician’s hard drive or office server. The optimum time to review the digital images is at the time of dictation and final sign out. Currently there is a tendency not to refer to the images as various browsers or steps are required to recall the files.

A file can contain any type of media, i.e., video, documents, images or recordings. Palettes for video and audio files will be used. This will enable the pathologist to record commentary while demonstrating a wound or create recorded notes about pending outstanding tests required to complete a report.

Conclusion: A personalized application has been created which reduces the steps to call up various files in the case folder. This application relies on readily available software for construction of an interface with links to many file types. Different software applications now share enough similarities in file management and language allowing for linkage. Some applications such as video rely heavily on memory as well as processor speed. Other advances in technology, i.e., cost reduction and software development have increased accessibility to the computer user. Here is an application that allows for a specific interface that is designed to suit a single pathologist.

File, Palette, Icon