



D17 Alcestis: Bridging the Gap Between Morbidity Research and Health Surveillance

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The goal of this presentation is to present an overview of Alcestis and its use in enhancing communication with other governmental agencies in with regards to instances of death.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing an overview of Alcestis; the benefits that can be obtained by medical examiners, coroners, and death scene investigators; and preliminary findings of analyses conducted from data collected by Alcestis in Michigan. The system could serve as a comprehensive source of information that can be accessed anywhere by appropriate individuals to research and track a case. Information in the database is accessed in a hierarchical fashion. In other words, login and password allow users to be privy to as much or to as little information as is necessary. Consequently, local health departments and police can be provided with the information they require without violating HIPAA compliancy.

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Medical examiner and coroner investigations produce valuable information useful to health officials, the criminal justice system, and families of the deceased. Alcestis provides uniform standards for data collection and reporting procedures for medical examiners and coroners at the state or county level.

Alcestis bridges the gap between surveillance and research with the creation of an electronic system storing in-depth data on the circumstances and social factors surrounding fatal injuries and unexpected deaths. Hosted on the Internet, the database provides health professionals with a valuable tool for community health assessments, injury prevention efforts, and other statewide efforts.

Alcestis provides medical examiner/coroner offices a fully supported package that includes: secure Internet access to the on-line database, paper data collection forms and data analysis tools. Training, technical support, and quality improvements are on-going. Medical examiners and coroners benefit from Alcestis through quick and easy access to their mortality data, instant reports and the ability to share data among offices and with other colleagues.

The system consists of three components: a death scene investigation report, an Internet-based database container for medical examiner data entry, and county profile pages connected to the database that automatically aggregate and chart the data for reporting.

Additionally, Alcestis serves as an alerting mechanism for local public health departments when instances of infectious disease or bioterrorism occur. The alert can be either a simple faxable form with the proper contact information clearly presented on the top, or an e-mail containing necessary information generated to **the proper** authority. The alert feature increases the frequency and ease of communication between medical examiner offices and local and state health departments. Enhanced communication allows for a strengthened relationship between these parties and ideally gives way to increased contact on many levels: emergency preparation, disease outbreaks, and scene investigation to name a few. Today's forensic science requires the full participation of agencies and departments on all levels and Alcestis assists parties in communication and case management.

A future direction for the system includes the possibility of collaboration with other statewide systems, including the state police database. The system could serve as a comprehensive source of information that can be accessed anywhere by appropriate individuals to research and track a case. Information in the database is accessed in a hierarchical fashion. In other words, login and password allow users to be privy to as much or to as little information as is necessary. Consequently, local health departments and police can be provided with the information they require without violating HIPAA compliancy.

This new technology is an enhanced tool for forensic scientists that can be used during the course of medical examiner or coroner investigations as well as serve as a communication tool for other governmental agencies including, but not limited to, local public health departments.

Interagency Communication, Injury Surveillance, Mortality Research