



Pathology & Biology Section – 2004

G43 FluiDDB.com: A Model Database for Unidentified Bodies

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The goal of this presentation is to highlight the importance for medical examiners to have a database where information about unidentified decedents can be kept and ultimately used as a central clearinghouse for interested parties searching for information about missing persons.

It is our hope that FLUIDDB.com will serve as a model for medical examiner's offices in all states and that it will be instrumental in identifying at least a portion of the unidentified bodies that previously established criminal databases have not been able to successfully identify. It is also our goal to encourage newfound interest in medical examiners and their staff to re-examine the case files that lay dormant in their offices of these "forgotten" bodies.

This presentation will highlight the reasons why there should exist an easily accessible website where information about unidentified bodies found may be readily accessed by family members, police, and any other interested party. Dr. Marta Coburn, Chief Medical Examiner of Collier County, Florida realized the need to create such a website and designed a simple, yet comprehensive, database. FLUIDDB.com, an acronym for Florida Unidentified Decedents Database, employs existing computer technology in a user-friendly format that engages the interested party in the search process, while maintaining the integrity of sensitive criminal data. This fact is instrumental in the success of the identification process because current criminal databases are not available for public use.

Identification of a body is often hampered for many reasons and the longer a body remains unidentified, the less likely it is that their identity will be discovered. To compound the problem, the majority of medical examiner's offices do not have the means to readily access all of their cases of unidentified bodies. Therefore, even the most cursory search cannot be executed when medical examiners receive requests for information from family members searching for missing loved ones. The database will serve to organize these cases into a format that permits medical examiner staff immediate retrieval of information. A complete list with information about all of the unidentified deaths is obtainable given the participation of each medical examiner's office in a given state. The searcher may then streamline their focus and pursue only those published cases that match the information about the missing person they seek. The website was also designed to allow each office to easily update or delete information as needed. The discussion will include insight about entering information into the various data fields from the medical examiner's perspective and how to retrieve information from the searcher's viewpoint.

This presentation also discusses future plans to link FLUIDDB.com to other websites that may contain purely scientific information such as dental records or anthropological data. Recommendations for medical examiners and their staff of the most effective methods for establishing identification of unidentified bodies will also be provided. These guidelines will hopefully serve as a checklist of steps that should be taken during the early part of an investigation in an effort to exhaust all means of conventional identification procedures.

The office of the District Twenty Medical Examiner is confident that this database will eliminate the need for families or police to write, call or fax each individual medical examiner's office or law enforcement agency and will instead utilize the website as a means to narrow their search.

Unidentified Bodies, Identification, Missing Persons