



D32 The Role of the Qualified Radiographer in Forensic Investigations

Nancy S. Adams, BS, Itawamba Community College, 202 Milford Street, # 155, Tupelo, MS 38801*

After attending this presentation, attendees will gain insight into the educational requirements for qualified radiographers and develop awareness for the unique skills the radiographer offers in forensic science.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by introducing this important but unrepresented discipline to the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and increase awareness of the value of the highly skilled radiographer to the forensics team.

Mother Nature is on a rampage, or so it appears from recent naturally occurring catastrophic events. Terrorist attacks are escalating around the globe. Although the world's population growth rate has slowed down, projections indicate population levels will be nearly 9.1 billion people by 2050, nearly a 50% increase compared to 2002. The population levels, coupled with extreme weather and unimaginable terrorist activity, present a horrific opportunity for mass tragedies unlike any ever encountered. Add to this mix the genuine threat of pandemics, and humanity faces the real possibility of a staggering number of deaths. The demand for identification of the deceased and determination of causes will be significant. Although radiology has always been a component in forensic investigations, the importance of having qualified, experienced radiographers as team members has not been recognized by the forensic scientific community. The appropriately trained, experienced radiographers, many of whom possess baccalaureate or advanced degrees, offer a unique and valuable set of skills and knowledge to aid in identification and determination of cause. This presentation will provide an overview of the curriculum and clinical education required of radiographers for national board certification. Criteria for advanced practice in the field of forensic radiography will be offered, and the practical skills the radiographer can bring to forensic imaging are discussed. Although the radiographer's scope of practice does not include interpretation and diagnosis, no one in the medical profession critiques the images for positional and technical accuracy or looks at more images than the radiographer. These skills make the radiographer especially adept at recognizing anatomical and positional variations and comparing ante- and postmortem images. These skills also ensure that the radiographer can produce images that correctly mimic antemortem images. And the certified radiographer has been properly educated and trained in a variety of imaging equipment, including C-arms, CT, and digital imaging equipment. The radiographer must be innovative and adaptable as they deal with the greatest variable known to medicine, the living human being. These attributes enable them to function in a variety of conditions and situations that are appropriate when dealing with the dead as well. As a final deliberation, forensic pathologists and other forensic scientists must be mindful of the religious beliefs that prohibit invasive autopsies. This is just one more aspect where the forensic radiographer can be of invaluable service.

Identification, Radiographer, Images