



Pathology Biology Section – 2009

G112 Radiology Students and Morgues: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be better informed of the benefits that may be realized by affiliating with a radiologic technology program to provide radiology students with clinical morgue experience.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by making people aware of the improvements to radiographic image quality that may be accomplished when radiology students are allowed to observe autopsies and assist with forensic radiographs. A secondary benefit is recognized in preparing the radiologic technologist to assist with other skills such as evidence collection and preservation.

Interest in the forensic sciences has grown significantly in recent years as events and the media have focused attention on forensic investigations, and the radiologic sciences are no exception. Due to most morgues and medical examiner facilities being totally separate from hospitals today, the radiology student and radiology practitioner do not have adequate experience in forensic imaging. As radiology equipment becomes more and more sophisticated, and imaging techniques such as virtual autopsies and 3D CT reconstruction are utilized more frequently, the skills of the board-certified technologist will be in greater demand. Due to the nature of the work, it is important for the student to have some knowledge of the expectations and working conditions to aid in determining if this is a field they may wish to pursue. Just as the student obtains knowledge and experience in a broad range of imaging modalities to decide on a career path after graduation, an introduction to the morgue and forensic imaging should be available as well. Many times the radiologic technologist must image living and deceased subjects in the emergency department, and if that technologist has some forensic training and background, preservation of evidence would be complied with, observation and interview skills would be enhanced, and the images obtained would provide proper legal documentation.

The morgue or medical examiner's facility can benefit by having students and instructors available who are well-versed in recognizing imaging artifacts, equipment and image processing malfunctions, and are able to troubleshoot and correct or at least identify the problem. They can develop proper exposure techniques and set up guidelines; train morgue assistants in obtaining better images; recognize foreign objects and implants; position to overcome superimposition of structures or demonstrate an anatomical part more accurately. In addition, the instructors work with the students to compare ante-and postmortem images and reproduce an antemortem position if necessary for comparison. An additional benefit includes access to board-certified instructors who are available to the facility for consultation, physically or electronically. A financial benefit to the facility may also be considered, as the students and instructors are not paid employees, and may assist in reducing overhead by maintaining the x-ray and image processing equipment in proper working order. And as a final benefit, the facility may be able to recruit exceptional candidates for employment, many of whom will have a bachelor's degree and may seek additional training as a multi-skilled individual.

This presentation describes an arrangement between a radiologic technology program and a medical examiner's facility and the mutual benefits both groups have enjoyed to date, including the development of a forensic radiography handbook suitable for both the novice radiographer and the morgue assistant involved in taking forensic x-rays. **Radiology, Student, Education**