



Physical Anthropology Section – 2009

H55 The Forensic Anthropologist, the National Crime Information Center (N.C.I.C.), and National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) Databases

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand how the forensic anthropologist can be an active and effective participant in utilizing the national informational databases in the investigation of unidentified persons.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by highlighting the key points of the National Crime Information Center (N.C.I.C.) and National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) databases, and the challenges faced by the forensic anthropologist.

In this age of instant communication, public opinion expects investigations to be completed in a 60-minute time frame. Some of the primary tools used by law enforcement for gathering and organizing the immense amount of information and scientific data collected in the course of an unidentified person investigation are the N.C.I.C. and NamUs databases.

N.C.I.C., maintained by the F.B.I., is a nationwide online computer/telecommunication system, which contains millions of records of persons and property records from across the United States. N.C.I.C. was established in 1967 and at the current time is used by all 50 states, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, Canada, and federal agencies. It is accessible only by criminal justice and law enforcement agencies. Medical examiner/coroner agencies can have access if they meet certain criteria set through shared management between FBI and state and local law enforcement.

In unidentified person investigations, N.C.I.C. captures identifying information such as personal descriptors and dental data, which is entered by the investigating law enforcement agency. N.C.I.C. will automatically cross-match this information against missing and wanted persons' records. This comparison is performed on a daily basis on the records that have been entered or modified the previous day. A list of potential matches is generated for each agency that enters information. These entries and matches are restricted to the agencies that have access. Verification of scientific data entered on unidentified person cases by the forensic science community is usually not routine.

The medical examiner/coroner, or their designee, controls the case information entered or edited into the NamUs unidentified database, after an online registration. Unlike N.C.I.C., NamUs is web-based, though not all uploaded information on the case is viewable by the public. Personal descriptors and dental information are entered into the NamUs database, after review by a member of the forensic science community, such as the forensic anthropologist. NamUs has strived to simplify its entries, making it user-friendly to the public. Active participation by the forensic anthropologist, medical examiner, or forensic odontologist in the entry, modification, and comparison of unidentified person data ensures that accurate information is entered into the database. This process is imperative in the comparison with missing persons' information.

This presentation will demonstrate how the active participation by the forensic anthropologist can ensure accuracy of database information, which may increase the number of individuals who could be identified. It is recommended that those in the forensic science community working with unidentified persons become an active participant with the national databases used in these investigations.

Forensic Anthropology, N.C.I.C., NamUs