



D62 NamUs Human Identification and Reconciliation: Process and Implementation

Anthony B. Falsetti, PhD, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32610; Susan M. Thurston Myster, PhD, Hamline University, MB 196, 1536 Hewitt Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104; Norman J. Sauer, PhD, Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University, 354 Baker Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; Bruce E. Anderson, PhD, Forensic Science Center, 2825 East District Street, Tucson, AZ 85714; Elizabeth A. Murray, PhD, College of Mount Saint Joseph, Department of Biology, 5701 Delhi Road, Cincinnati, OH 45233-1670; Warren D. Tewes, DDS, 108 Bakers Lane, Queenstown, MD 21658-1101; Peter W. Loomis, DDS, 3801 San Marcos Place, NorthEast, Albuquerque, NM 87111; and Richard M. Scanlon, DMD, 27 Sandy Lane, #206, Lewistown, PA 17044-1320*

After attending this presentation, attendees will understand how the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) can be used in the process of human identification, what types of data can be stored and searched, available forensic services, and how potential matches with missing persons are included/excluded as a case moves towards resolution.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by defining what the human identification process is for NamUs.

NamUs fills an overwhelming need in the United States for a central reporting system for unidentified human remains and missing person's records. There are as many as 40,000 unidentified decedents and approximately 100,000 missing persons in the United States annually (*The CJIS Link* Vol. 9, No. 3, October 2006, FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division). NamUs consists of two databases that are fully searchable by law enforcement and majority searchable by the general public, allowing these groups to share information and work together across state and jurisdictional lines to more effectively resolve cases. The two NamUs databases are fully integrated to allow simultaneous searching of the Missing Persons (MP) records against cases in the Unidentified Decedents Database (UP) to locate comparable records and resolve cases.

The definition of the human identification process for purposes of NamUs refers to the reconciliation of antemortem information from missing persons with data derived from unidentified decedents. The reconciliation of data sets includes comparison of intrinsic biological data such as estimated age at death, biological sex, racial affiliation, living stature, known physiologic conditions, and other individualizing characteristics. Extrinsic information includes clothing manufacturer data, shoe size and make, vision prescription, last known address, height and weight from non-medical records such as a driver's license, or other work- issued identification and is also searchable.

Unidentified decedent files entered by medical examiner's and coroner's offices include the physiological or intrinsic characteristics of a person, as well as any available extrinsic factors including the location, search and recovery of the decedent, if recorded. A member of the NamUs Forensic Team can create a basic biological profile to include a wide range of identifiers and record any and every individualizing characteristic for further study. In the case of dental structures, dentures and the like, NamUs forensic odontologists are available to chart the dentition in accordance with accepted practice. Tissue samples for DNA analysis can be prepared following the guidelines established by the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification, at no cost to agencies.

Missing persons files can be entered by families, law enforcement officials and other non-profit agencies and typically contain many basic biological characteristics as well as extrinsic information that is often highly detailed. To ensure accuracy and legitimacy, NamUs Regional Systems Administrators (RSA) review MP cases prior to publication. The NamUs Forensic Services Team coordinates with the RSA to compile detailed information regarding dental and medical records and potential sources of biological reference material. Review of these files by the members of the NamUs Forensic Team results in a written opinion that stored on the NamUs MP file.

Case managers review NamUs-generated potential matches, assessing points of similarity to determine next steps. All forensic services used to include/exclude any potential employ standard forensic methods, procedures and documentation in the course of case comparison. A final reconciliation report is made to the local coroner/medical examiner, justice of the peace and/or law enforcement agency for final evaluation and assessment of "positive identification." These agencies follow conventional practices and legal protocol for official notification to the family and generate the death certificate.

Several cases will be used as examples of how forensic services and the NamUs system have advanced the resolution of MP and UP cases. It is recommended that forensic professionals, medical examiners and coroners and law enforcement become familiar with this powerful and useful new tool that is available nationwide at no charge.

NamUs, Human Identification, Missing Persons