



## Physical Anthropology Section - 2012

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### H24 Recent Activities of the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Anthropology (SWGANTH)

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After attending this presentation, attendees will become familiar with the recent activities of the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Anthropology (SWGANTH).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness of the SWGANTH's work to establish, identify, and publish "Best Practices" within the forensic anthropology discipline.

In late 2007, the U.S. Department of Defense Central Identification Laboratory (DOD CIL) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Laboratory cosponsored the creation of the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Anthropology, or SWGANTH. With the formation, success, and continued effort of SWGANTH, Forensic Anthropology has demonstrated its dedication to the advancement of discipline practices, improving communication, and building consensus among forensic anthropology professionals and with forensic community partners.

SWGANTH's initial purposes were to identify best practice guidelines for the Forensic Anthropology discipline and to disseminate guidelines, studies, and other findings that may be of benefit to the forensic anthropological community. To achieve this goal, the group's 20-member Board, comprised of professionals representing a broad cross-section of expertise and jurisdictional involvement, created committees to address specific topics relevant to the practice of Forensic Anthropology. Each committee, populated by forensic anthropologists from the United States and around the world, is charged with researching, capturing, and distilling the current best practices for the topic addressed by that committee. In addition to the development of Bylaws and a Code of Ethics and Conduct, topic areas addressed by the SWGANTH to date include:

Most of these guidelines have already been approved and published, and the remaining committees are close to issuing their final recommendations. In addition, the SWGANTH recently created committees charged with developing a proficiency testing program for forensic anthropology laboratories, identifying basic components of forensic anthropology educational programs, identifying research needs in the field of forensic anthropology, and creating an audit checklist that will aid forensic anthropologists in evaluating their performance relative to the larger community. The SWGANTH has also arranged for these documents and recommendations to be translated into Spanish, French, Arabic, and Russian. These guidelines, recommendations, and other materials of interest are published on the publicly accessible website: [www.swganth.org](http://www.swganth.org).

Several major developments that have occurred within the last year involve organizational changes to the structure and intent of the SWGANTH. First, the Board voted to expand the membership from 20 to 25 members. While logistical and administrative constraints argue for maintaining the Board's composition at or near 20 members, the group voted to add the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a member of the SWGANTH, allowing the ICRC to participate as an organization and bring a broad international perspective to the group. Second, the group voted to enact term limits for Board members. Board members will now serve three-year terms beginning in 2011 and 2012. Third, the group voted to expand the purpose of SWGANTH to include the possibility of developing consensus Minimum Standards rather than being limited to identifying only Best Practices. Fourth, the group created a committee to examine the concept of Forensic Archaeology with an eye toward integrating this emerging sub-field into the larger Forensic Anthropology discipline.

#### **Forensic Anthropology, SWGANTH, Best Practices**