



### F20 Updating a Dental School Forensic Odontology Curriculum in the Post 9/11 Era

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After attending this presentation, participants will be able to describe a predoctoral forensic odontology curriculum responsive to community needs post 9/11, develop a well-rounded curriculum in forensic odontology, and develop partnerships between a dental school and a regional medical examiner's office to offer student rotations to a medical examiner's office.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by stimulating the interest of future dentists to the field of forensic odontology, providing graduating dental students with an understanding of the importance of record keeping and the role of their patient records in a victim identification effort, and developing a cadre of dentists who will have the necessary foundation knowledge to volunteer in a time of crisis.

This paper presents a course developed to reflect the current needs of the dental curriculum in a post 9/11 world and to help prepare dentists to serve their community.

The overall objective is to familiarize senior dental student with the various aspects of forensic dentistry including an overview of the role of the medical examiner, medical legal investigator, the forensic dental team, and the community dentist; as well as an introduction to victim identification based on dental records, bitemark analysis, photography for the forensic dentist, forensic anthropology, and forensic dental software. In addition, the course has been designed to provide students the foundational knowledge necessary to be a productive member of a mass fatality forensic identification team.

Curriculae include:

- **Introduction to Forensic Dentistry and Medicine:** This is a general overview of the field.
- **The Forensic Dental Team:** An explanation of the various components of the forensic dental team, roles of the various components of the team, and how to create a forensic dental team.
- **Dental Identification:** The importance of assisting in victim identification and what role the forensic dentist plays in the identification.
- **Bitemarks and the Role They Play in Criminal Investigations:** A discussion of past and present research into bitemark analysis and the uniqueness of the human dentition.
- **Mass Disasters:** The role of the dentist in assisting and making a dental identification during a mass fatality incident, i.e., antemortem, postmortem, comparison, and recovery teams.
- **Forensic Anthropology:** This lecture reviews the role of the forensic anthropologist in assisting in the identification of victims of a mass fatality incident as well as the unknown.
- **The Role of the Medical Legal Death Investigator (MLDI):** This lecture covers what an MLDI is and their function relative to an investigation.
- **The Role of All Dentists in Forensic Dental Investigations:** This lecture covers the dentist's legal and ethical obligation during a forensic investigation, their role regarding record keeping, and their obligations to cooperate with the authorities when records are requested.
- **The Medical Examiner's Office:** This lecture explains the role of the Medical Examiner's Office within the community from monitoring illness to death investigations.
- **Imaging:** This lecture explains the role photography and radiology plays in victim identification and bitemark investigations and the pros and cons associated with forensic photography as it relates to dentistry.
- **Forensic dentistry software:** This session will expose dental students to the various types of software programs available to aid in victim identification of persons unknown and for managing mass disasters.

An optional rotation will provide an opportunity for students to visit the Northern Regional Medical Examiner's Office in Newark, New Jersey, to enable senior dental students to become familiar with the day-to-day workings of a medical examiner's office. Dental students must have attended the didactic forensic dentistry elective offered by the New Jersey Dental School. This is a unique opportunity for dental students to witness firsthand, as well as having a hands-on experience, in the field of forensic odontology. The rotation takes place over three consecutive days from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and two students at a time participate in the rotation so as not to interfere with the day-to-day operations of the office.

The students shadow the medical staff of the office while they are performing their daily duties. On the third day of the rotation, each student is required to give a 15-minute presentation on dentistry/forensic odontology. The presentation is given to the Medical Examiner's office staff, medical students, and medical residents rotating through the Medical Examiner's Office. After the presentation, the students accompany dental school faculty associated with the Medical Examiner's Office to the autopsy area. Students will participate in a hands-on experience of doing dental examinations and obtaining radiographs on a decedent.

#### Forensic Odontology, Curriculum, Education