



F21 Aligned Education, Cooperative Learning, and International Collaboration in Forensic Dentistry

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain a clearer understanding of the effects of international collaboration in the establishment and development of forensic dentistry in countries where this science has not received attention in the past.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness that, through aligned education, learning, international collaboration, and exchange, forensic dentistry can become an integral and vital part of police investigation work and disaster victim identification everywhere.

In the dental forensic community, it is a known fact that some countries are more advanced than others in utilizing forensic dentistry in crime investigation and/or disaster victim identification while others struggle to achieve a united vision and understanding among the different government agencies involved. Therefore, it becomes the moral and ethical responsibility and privilege of the more advanced forensic communities to engage in a collaborative effort to integrate this science into police investigation work in the less developed territories.

An example of this kind of international collaboration took place in Hungary where interest in the field of forensic dentistry first emerged at a time when little attention was given to this topic due to low criminal activity. Upon attending seminars and courses on the topic in the United States, including the symposium offered at the Center for Education and Research in Forensics in San Antonio, and through continued education, learning, and support from colleagues and mentors in the United States, this learning and experience was brought back to Hungary. The importance of bitemark analysis and victim identification was brought to light not only for the Hungarian Crime Scene Investigation Team but also for the general public through the mass media. Furthermore, a Disaster Victim Identification Forensic Expert Team was established which is now under the umbrella of the Hungarian Police Department. Additionally, the Hungarian Immigration Body is exploring possibilities to implement an age estimation program based on wisdom teeth development, a program originally developed and taught by the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

This knowledge and awareness has not been limited to Hungary. The International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest, which is run by the FBI, has asked for these topics to be incorporated into the training of their international police recruits and agents. Thus, the knowledge has been transmitted to Bulgaria, Kosovo, Romania, Macedonia, Montenegro, and other countries in Europe. The Semmelweis Medical University Department of Forensic Medicine in Budapest, which has integrated bitemark analysis, age estimation, and disaster victim identification into its curriculum, has contacted its partner agencies in Israel and, as a result, the National Israeli Police has so far arranged two workshops on bitemark analysis with follow-up programs for in the near future. Moreover, upon completion of their dental education at the Semmelweis University, newly trained dentists bring their knowledge and learning back to their home countries including Germany, Norway, Austria, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Greece, Cyprus, Iran, Israel, and other countries in the Middle East.

These incredible unforeseen accomplishments have been made possible because of the continued collaboration, exchange of knowledge and ideas, accompaniment and capacity building, and the support and encouragement received from mentors and colleagues working in the field in the United States. In facing common challenges and service to humanity, the concept of accompaniment and assistance in developing capacities are vital in chartering an individual path for progress. Great accomplishments in public service are achieved through unity of vision and action and mutual and ongoing collaboration and support.

Education, Learning, Collaboration