



Physical Anthropology Section - 2013

H25 Results Based Management and Forensic Anthropology: The Ontario Experience— Part 1: Human vs. Non-Human

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand how to apply Results Based Managements (RBM) models to their own areas of practice, and how to assess the impact of a new input (in this case specifically, a full-time forensic anthropologist).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community and, specifically, jurisdictions utilizing forensic anthropology by providing assessment tools for their particular area of forensic science in order to demonstrate a measurable and positive impact of the use of the science in a language that governments understand (fiscal responsibility, accountability, stakeholder satisfaction, etc.)

Forensic anthropologists provide services to medicolegal death investigation systems. These systems are usually government-based, and are part of a broader legal system. Death investigations can also inform other government agencies, such as public policy and health departments/ministries among others. RBM strategies or approaches are those that focus on achieving outcomes and impact, rather than activities and input. RBM has been widely embraced by international development agencies as a way to assess the effectiveness of the billions of dollars of aid funneled through the United Nations. The end result of RBM is to improve the performance of an organization as well as its accountability. While all forensic anthropologists and the organizations which utilize their services or employ them understand why they are needed, the impact of the use of forensic anthropology is not often measured on a broader scale which may include such things as risk and economics.

This presentation introduces the first of a three-part analysis of the outcomes and impact of having a full-time forensic anthropologist in a government death investigation service. Here, the assessment of bones for their origin (human vs. non-human) over a two-year time period (July 2010 to July 2012) is presented. In Ontario, the forensic anthropologist works in a medical coroners' death investigation system, legislated by The Coroner's Act R.S.O. 1990. The Act outlines the duties of both coroners and forensic pathologists in the system. The responsibility of the coroners begins when they are informed about a body of a dead person in their jurisdiction. Although the remains of animals are not persons, historically, these have been assessed by coroners and/or pathologists. In the recent past, animal bones were also assessed by fee-for-service forensic anthropologists. It is known (anecdotally) but not documented that these remains are also assessed by police, academics, veterinarians, and local doctors. In July 2011, a salaried, full-time forensic anthropologist began working in Ontario.

In the period assessed, approximately 400 cases of non-human remains were reported on (ca. 200 per year). In the year following the hiring of a full-time forensic anthropologist, approximately half of these remains were assessed via digital images sent to the forensic anthropologist from the scene where they were found (in a few cases, they had been moved to a police station). The other half were assessed either at a scene, a police station, or a forensic pathology unit by a coroner or forensic pathologist travelling to the scene to look at the bones. Utilizing the RBM model, the differences between the new approach (forensic anthropologist and digital images) and the historical approach were analyzed. The outcome effects were assessed by a number of factors including fiscal/economic (costs associated with paying fee for service coroners, police-person hours spent holding scenes or photographing remains, case management and reporting costs, etc.), stakeholder satisfaction, and risk, among others. A positive impact can already be demonstrated by the use of the forensic anthropologist and digital identifications at many levels; however, to date there is no widespread systemic change, and some reasons for this will be presented. RBM is a useful model which provides substantive data for other jurisdictions which may be considering the addition of a full-time specialist in a forensic field that may currently be serviced by fee-for-service specialists. Future analyses will look at the impact of full-time forensic anthropologists with other types of cases, including those that are not of recent forensic interest and those that are.

Forensic Anthropology, RBM, Impact