



## Breakfast Seminars - 2017

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### **BS1 The Mummies of Central New York — A Unique Experience for a Medical Examiner's Office**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about the unique opportunity the Onondaga County Medical Examiner's Office had in examining two Egyptian mummies. Participants will be able to understand how a multidisciplinary approach led to interesting historical findings as well as a cancer diagnosis. The cancer diagnosis discussion will ask the question, "Does this diagnosis change theories that cancer is a result of modern lifestyles and environment?"

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by explaining: (1) how the medical examiner's office examined two Egyptian mummies; (2) the collaborative efforts of other forensic science disciplines; and, (3) the modern forensic techniques that lead to interesting historical information and possible information for the future.

Medical examiner personnel often see the effects of human mummification in their daily operation. This postmortem change typically occurs on human bodies that have been left in a dry, hot environment for a period of time. This type of postmortem change is often referred to as natural mummification.

From 6000 B.C. to 600 A.D., ancient Egyptians were known to have been the first civilization to perform preservation of not only dead humans, but also non-human remains such as cats and birds. This preservation process was performed by removing the brain, evisceration, immersion, dehydration, and wrapping the body in cloth. Egypt's desert environment aided this mummification process. This is an example of artificial mummification.

The Onondaga County Medical Examiner's Office had the opportunity to examine two Egyptian mummies. One mummy was a mummified head that had been found during an estate auction of a World War II United States Army veteran. He had found the head in a castle while he was stationed in Germany and brought it home at the end of his tour. Research revealed that Napoleon stowed two mummy heads there during his raid of Egypt. After this invasion, Napoleon had been known to stay in this castle on his way back to France.

The other mummy was a full body that had been on display at a local library's Egyptian exhibit. This mummy had been brought to this community in the 1800s by a well-known wealthy citizen of this village. When he died, his Last Will and Testament was read in which this mummy and other Egyptian artifacts were donated to the library.

The forensic disciplines involved in these examinations were pathology, anthropology, trace evidence, chemistry, and radiology. Carbon dating was also performed. Information from these disciplines revealed information about the age at time of death, the possible eras in which these people lived, and their possible status in society. The full body mummy was determined to have had cancer. Does this cancer revelation provide humans with any information about future cancer research?

The routine day-to-day death investigations at a medical examiner's office often involve decedents who have been naturally mummified; however, it is a unique experience for a moderate-sized office to have the opportunity to examine two Egyptian mummies within a one-year time frame. This presentation will discuss this involvement.

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#### **Mummies, Radiology, History**

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