



H123 Preliminary Findings From the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) Medical Examiner/Coroner Office Survey

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the DEA's NFLIS expansion and results from their 2017 medical examiner/coroner office survey.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing specific knowledge of medical examiner and coroner office operations, policies, practices, and resource needs of the United States' medicolegal death investigation system.

The NFLIS represents an important DEA resource in monitoring illicit drug abuse and trafficking. Available NFLIS data reflect the results from drug chemistry analyses conducted by federal, state, and local forensic laboratories across the country (NFLIS-Drug). NFLIS-Drug currently includes more than 95% of the nation's crime laboratories that regularly report data from solid-dosage drug analyses from law enforcement seizures. NFLIS-Drug data are used to support drug scheduling decisions and to inform drug policy and drug-enforcement initiatives nationally and in local communities around the country.

Over the next few years, DEA will expand NFLIS to include drug-related mortality data from the nation's Medical Examiner and Coroner offices (NFLIS-MEC) and drug testing results from public and private toxicology laboratories (NFLIS-TOX) across the United States. The new NFLIS-MEC and NFLIS-TOX data collections will extend DEA's radar in identifying new and emerging drugs and to inform drug use patterns. In preparation for this expansion, DEA conducted a 2017 NFLIS-MEC office survey and a Toxicology Laboratory (TL) Survey. Preliminary results from the MEC survey will be discussed in this presentation.

The MEC survey was designed by NFLIS staff with the help of external MEC and toxicology consultants. Mailed surveys were sent to all identified MECs ($N=2,156$) in the United States. NFLIS staff performed several actions to increase survey responses, including verification calls to confirm MEC office contact information and point of contact, prompting call reminders about the mailed survey, and non-response calling to collect two critical questions. In addition, NFLIS staff reached out to all state coroners associations, the National Association of Medical Examiners, and the International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners, among others, to encourage participation. Survey responses were collected via a mixed mode data collection (web, mail, and telephone). Data collection began in June 2017 and concluded in October 2017. Survey results highlighting findings related to operation, caseloads, turnaround times, toxicology testing practices, accreditation, and information management systems of MEC offices will be discussed. Where possible, the data will be presented by type of office and size of jurisdiction. The results will provide attendees a broad understanding of the operations, policies, practices, and resource needs of the nation's medicolegal death investigation system. Moreover, DEA will outline its plans for the NFLIS expansion.

NFLIS, DEA, Medical Examiner/Coroner