

# SPECIAL SESSIONS



## S1 Interdisciplinary Symposium: Problems of Today and Solutions for Tomorrow

Tuesday, February 22

*Pre-Registration Required—\$75*

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

*Chair:*

**Christopher M. Milroy, MD, LLB**

University of Ottawa  
Ottawa Hospital  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

*Co-Chair:*

**Paul Messner, JD**

Dry Ridge, KY

*Presenters:*

**James L. Caruso, MD**

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner  
Denver, CO

**Lucy Davis, BHS**

LDH Consultants, LLC  
Pikeville, KY

**Heidi Eldridge, PhD**

RTI International  
Research Triangle Park, NC

**Roderick T. Kennedy, JD**

Los Ranchos, NM

**Barry Logan, PhD**

NMS Labs  
Horsham, PA

**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will have a greater understanding of current challenges in multiple forensic science disciplines, death investigations, and in the courts.

**Impact Statement:** This presentation will impact the forensic sciences community by offering various perspectives regarding current issues and possible future solutions.

**Program Description:** This presentation will present various perspectives as they relate to forensic science, medicine, and the courts including: workload and workforce issues in forensic pathology and their impact on death investigations; the analytical challenges presented by the rapid development of illicit novel psychoactive substances; why standards created by the Academy Standards Board (ASB) are crucial to forensic science; and how pattern recognition discipline validity challenges are being addressed. The symposium will also discuss why courts are both reluctant to recognize challenges to previously accepted forensic science techniques and resistant to admitting evolved techniques.

## S2 Young Forensic Scientist Forum (YFSF) Special Session: Meeting and Overcoming Challenges Faced by Young Forensic Scientists

Tuesday, February 22

*Open to all registered attendees*

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

*Chair:*

**Zain Bhaloo, MSc**

Canada Border Services Agency  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

*Committee Member:*

**Hannah Simmons, BS**

Dirk Vastrick Presents  
Spokane Valley, WA

Presenters:

**Timothy Campbell BSc**

Canada Border Services Agency  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

**Aja Moss, MS**

Houston Forensic Science Center  
Houston, TX

**Kelly Freeman, MS**

Houston Forensic Science Center  
Houston, TX

**Jessica Powers, MS**

Houston Forensic Science Center  
Houston, TX

**Cheryl Hunter**

American Academy of Forensic Sciences  
Colorado Springs, CO

**Joe Trevino, MS**

Forensic Investigations  
Sunnyside, NY

**Brian Janysek, MFS**

Oakton, VA

**Molly Van Buren, MSc**

Houston Forensic Science Center  
Houston, TX

**Robert Lynch, BArch**

Architectural Expert & Consultant  
Haymarket, VA

**Dirk Vastrick, BA**

Dirk Vastrick Presents  
Spokane Valley, WA

**Modhuparna Manna, BTech**

Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA

**Matthew R. Wood, PhD**

Ocean County Sheriff's Department  
Forensic Science Laboratory  
Toms River, NJ

**Carl R. McClary, MS**

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives  
Atlanta, GA

**Learning Overview:** The YFSF will aim to bring to light some of these challenges and more importantly, highlight how the members and attendees of our very own American Academy of Forensic Science met these challenges head on, rose to the occasion and circumvented these challenges in order to get to their current positions.

**Impact Statement:** The impact of this Special Session will focus mostly on, but not exclusively on, the younger forensic scientists who are still in the process of trying to get to their "dream job". We say not exclusively because the age of the person will never dictate their entrance into a new career in forensics, therefore anyone and everyone can and will benefit from the information provided in this Special Session.

This session is designed from the ground up and tailored to the Young Forensic Scientists Forum attendees as well as any members of the AAFS who are or were experiencing difficulties in the transition from Student to Professional. So many hurdles are present in this journey, many of which young scientists are completely unprepared for: building and updating resumes, job interviewing skills and techniques, proper and efficient networking, and all the mistakes, difficulties and challenges in between.

**Schedule:**

9:00 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.	<b>Introduction to the YFSF</b> <i>Zain Bhaloo, MSc</i>
9:10 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.	<b>Membership in AAFS</b> <i>Cheryl Hunter</i>
9:25 a.m. – 9:35 a.m.	<b>Presidential Address</b> <i>Carl R. McClary, MS</i>
9:35 a.m. – 9:55 a.m.	<b>Food and Forensics: Building Interpersonal Relationships With Coworkers and Colleagues</b> <i>Joe Trevino, MS</i>
9:55 a.m. – 10:20 a.m.	<b>The Challenges Faced by Young Forensic Scientists in Memory Forensics</b> <i>Modhuparna Manna, BTech</i>
10:20 a.m. – 10:35 a.m.	<b>BREAK</b>
10:35 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.	<b>The Difficulties I Encountered Job Hunting and What I Learned</b> <i>Zain Bhaloo, MSc</i>
10:55 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	<b>The Challenges Encountered by a Budding Forensic Scientist</b> <i>Timothy Campbell BSc</i>
11:15 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.	<b>Be Unique!</b> <i>Robert Lynch, BArch</i>
11:35 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	<b>Finding/Earning Success in the Forensic Science Field: A Summary of What Worked and What Did Not in 32 Years as a Federal Agent</b> <i>Brian Janysek, MFS</i>
12:00 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.	<b>BREAK</b>
1:10 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	<b>We Need You! Participation in AAFS Committee Work</b> <i>Matthew R. Wood, PhD</i>
1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	<b>Landing and Keeping Your Dream Job</b> <i>Jessica Powers, MS</i>
2:00 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.	<b>Hunting for a Job While Living Abroad/My First Job: From DNA Analyst to Death Investigator During the COVID-19 Pandemic</b> <i>Molly Van Buren, MSc</i>
2:20 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.	<b>A Tale of Two Worlds: From Crime Scene Investigator to the Lab</b> <i>Kelly Freeman, MS</i>
2:50 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.	<b>Don't Count Me Out: Overcoming Setbacks in Forensic Science</b> <i>Aja Moss, MS</i>
3:10 p.m. – 3:25 p.m.	<b>BREAK</b>
3:25 p.m. – 3:55 p.m.	<b>Resumes and Learning</b> <i>Dirk Vastrick. BA</i>
3:55 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.	<b>Resume Review Workshop</b> <i>Dirk Vastrick. BA; Zain Bhaloo, MSc</i>
4:40 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	<b>Questions &amp; Closing</b> <i>Hannah Simmons, BS</i>

Tuesday, February 22

*Pre-Registration Required—\$75*

11:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

*Chair:***JCU Downs, MD**forensX, LLC  
Charleston, SC*Co-Chair:***Tanisha Henson, JD**Maricopa County District Attorney’s Office  
Phoenix, AZ*Presenters:***Barry Fisher, MBA, MS**NIJ  
Indio, CA**John Fudenberg, MBA**IACME  
Las Vegas, NV**Judy Melinek, MD**PathologyExpert, Inc.  
San Francisco, CA**Bobbi Jo O’Neal, RN**Charleston County  
North Charleston, SC**Greg Ramey, MPA**

Lafayette, GA

**Edwin P. Stevens**APS Films LLC  
Glendale, CA

**Learning Overview:** The audience can be expected to learn about the impact that media can and does have on forensic casework at multiple levels and how to successfully engage with journalists while maintaining objectivity in casework.

**Impact Statement:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing documented pitfalls & successes in various media and Forensic Science Professionals in handling casework and suggest strategies for future improvement in the flow of information while protecting necessary information.

Forensics Professionals are keenly aware of the impact their services have on cases. Part and parcel of this is intense public interest in and scrutiny of casework. One need only do a brief internet search to find over 1.5 million hits for “case of the century” including references to the accompanying media frenzies associated therewith. In many settings, the players – Forensics Experts and the media – are placed at seeming odds with each other, in a real or perceived effort to control information flow. Comfort comes in knowing that the crucible of second-guessing burns hot – but only until the next such case comes along. As this cycle of investigation-analysis-court-critique-resolution repeats, lessons are available for those willing to learn from their forebearers. As Voltaire asked, “Is there anyone so wise as to learn by the experience of others?”

All cases begin at the scene, where experience teaches many cases are won or lost based upon how a scene is processed and how an initial investigation commences. Los Angeles County, California is an enormous jurisdiction and no stranger to high profile cases, including OJ, Phil Spector, The Night Stalker, and too many others to count. A discussion of lessons learned from decades of leading the Forensic Laboratory analysis of such high profile provides valuable insights into the “dos” and “dons” of casework.

High interest cases, far from being limited to major jurisdictions, can literally occur anywhere and at any time. Case in point, 20 years ago in a sleepy northwest Georgia community of just over 60,000 people became home to a macabre nightmare of a case – an originally unknown number of human remains (later tallied at 339) was found literally dumped in and around the grounds of a family compound surrounding an operating crematory. Nothing similar on such a scale had been encountered before or since. The primary investigators had to deal with not only the casework to be done in order to identify the deceased and to prove criminal charges, but had to simultaneously inform the public while preventing the media from interfering with investigators’ duties. Issues encountered along the way proved challenging but a (partial, at least) successful case resolution followed thanks to good public relations anchoring good detective work.

Many jurisdictions conduct exhaustive preparatory exercises in order to be ready to face possible future mass disaster scenarios. Large or small, one can never be ready for all scenarios. The task of primary medicolegal death investigation falls in many jurisdictions on the Coroner, who must be prepared for any death(s) falling under their jurisdiction. One of the worst-case situations involves mass shooting fatalities. These happen suddenly and without warning. The Las Vegas shooting is an example of such a potentially overwhelming investigation. Lessons learned from the experience provide insights in readiness if such awful acts might occur again. Although fortunately involving fewer fatalities, lesser scale investigations can be no less troubling and warrant similar media scrutiny. The racially-motivated slaying of nine parishioners with clergy at a bible study group shocked a city, a nation, and the world. How could this happen here? In a city not unfamiliar with shocking cases – nine firefighters dead in the line of duty, a suspect shot in the back while fleeing, and the like are another day at the office for a medicolegal death investigator.

When the deceased come in, the task of examination of the remains and telling their story falls upon the Forensic Pathologist. As with other Forensics Professionals, the stories are waiting to be told - awaiting only an attentive ear and an eloquent voice. Personal recollections of the Medical Examiner can make for best-selling non-fiction. But, are there lessons to be learned about and in the telling?

Eventually, the press interest in cases comes to center on the courtroom where evidence – good or bad – is presented to a presumably objective arbiter of fact. With intense pre-trial and in-trial scrutiny, including live televised trials, Attorneys have had to adapt and perfect new strategies to best present their cases. Lessons learned from a career trial Criminal Defense Attorney (ongoing) turned TV journalist offer a unique perspective on the good, the bad, and the ugly of courtroom as entertainment and the media as fact source.

Often downplayed in the entire media hoopla surrounding a case is the victim, without whom there would be no story. Every victim has a story, but not everyone has someone to tell it. In a unique circumstance, the surviving family can tell the decedent's tale in such a way as to capture not only public but also professional interest. The session closes with the brother of a homicide victim, who shared his sister's story in an award winning documentary. The session will close with a special screening of her story: **"Alice is still dead."**

In the "sweet science" of pugilism, participants are assessed according to their literal physical dimensions – the "tale of the tape." In the modern era of ubiquitous video, the Forensic Sciences have been and continue to be judged based on a different – but no less real – physical comparison, the taped record of events. Properly anticipated and thoughtfully pursued, information flow can be successfully managed and utilized, leaving both sides, the pursuit of truth and the quest for justice, as winners.

#### **Schedule:**

11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	<b>Introduction</b> <i>JCU Downs, MD and Tanisha Henson, JD</i>
11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	<b>Dos and Don'ts at the Scene and in the Laboratory</b> <i>Barry Fisher, MBA, MS</i>
12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.	<b>Medicolegal Death Investigation: Part 1</b> <i>Bobbi Jo O'Neal, RN</i>
12:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.	<b>Medicolegal Death Investigation: Part 2</b> <i>John Fudenberg, MBA</i>
1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.	<b>The Aftermath-The Survivors</b> <i>Edwin P. Stevens</i>
2:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	<b>"Alice is Still Dead" (excerpt)</b> <i>Edwin P. Stevens</i>
2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b> <i>All Presenters</i>