

# IACME *news*

A publication of the Iowa Association of County Medical Examiners

MARCH 2014

## Scenes from the 2013 Fall Meeting



From left, Thomas Carroll, MD with Linda Kalin, RN and Dennis Klein, MD.



Longtime IACME members John Garred, Sr., MD and John Garred, Jr., MD.

## Electronic Death Certificate Training

Iowa's new Electronic Death Registration System is in the final phase of development. The EDRS will totally replace the paper registration process and is slated for implementation in April.

Training opportunities to help facilities and clinics prepare are available in locations around Iowa through April 11. Please check the IACME web site, [www.iacountyme.org](http://www.iacountyme.org) for details.

## 2014 Fall Meeting topics discussed Topics, speakers will be finalized in April

The IACME Program Committee, chaired by Dennis Klein, MD, is hard at work planning the 2014 Fall Meeting and is considering a lineup of extremely interesting topics.

The 2014 IACME Fall Meeting and Education Expo will be Friday and Saturday, November 14-15 at the West Des Moines Marriott.

Here is a list of topics under consideration by the committee:

**Major incident response**—Coordination and communication in handling a major incident such as a plane crash or mass shooting.

**Death by drowning**—An expert in homicidal drownings.

**Dealing with the media**—A media *continued page 4*

### Attendees will be able to register online

For the first time, those registering to attend the 2014 IACME Fall Meeting will be able to register and pay online through the IACME web site, [www.iacountyme.org](http://www.iacountyme.org). If preferred, registrants will also be able to pay via check through the mail.

Watch your email for more details as the meeting date approaches.

## Accreditation and certification in Iowa

by Gregory A. Schmunk, MD, BC-AP/FP and Julia Goodin, MD, BC-AP/CP/FP

When errors or lack of standards affect trial outcomes in high profile cases, the need for accreditation and certification in forensic science comes to the public's attention. In 2009, this public attention spearheaded a comprehensive study of forensic sciences by the National Research Council (NRC). The NRC's report assesses needs and deficiencies of the

forensic science system, including lack of funding, lack of evidence-based scientific research and lack of education and training. Much of the report deals with lack of mandatory standardization, certification and accreditation. Important legislation is being considered by Congress to address these issues. The NRC is

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### Join IACME, get a meeting discount!

Have you renewed your membership? Join IACME by March 31 and get a substantial member discount for the IACME Fall Meeting! Check [www.iacountyme.org](http://www.iacountyme.org) for a dues statement and member listing.



## ***Record attendance, positive feedback for IACME 2013 Fall Meeting and Education Expo***

**T**he Iowa Association of County Medical Examiners held another very successful Fall Meeting and Education Expo November 15-16 at the Marriott Hotel in West Des Moines.

Once again, the meeting set attendance records and generated very positive feedback in written evaluations. "This was a great learning experience," said one attendee. "This meeting gets better every year," commented another.

Speaker topics included forensic dentistry, sharp force injuries, toxicology, non-accidental pediatric trauma and scene investigation of suspicious death. The ME-101 course offered by the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner on Friday morning was also very well received.

Friday evening's banquet was preceded by a reception. The banquet featured a presentation on serial killers. The 2013 Member Meeting and annual elections were also held on Friday night.

Daniel Cole, MD, Fort Dodge, was elected IACME President. Paul Jensen, PharmD, MD, Cresco, was elected Vice President, and Dennis Crabb, MD, Denison is the new Secretary-



Attendees visit with exhibitors during a break.

Treasurer. They will serve two-year terms.

Incumbents reelected to the Board include Sheila Holcomb, MD, LeMars; Dennis I. Mallory, DO, Toledo and Marcus Nashelsky, MD, Iowa City. Thomas Carroll, MD, Sioux City, was also elected to the Board. All will serve two-year terms. ♦

***See page 4 for more photos of the IACME Fall Meeting***

## ***Accreditation and certification***

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calling for mandatory certification of anyone practicing forensic science, and the bills before Congress contain similar language.

Iowa is ahead of most other states in certification of death investigators. Iowa Administrative Code 641-127 requires that all county medical examiner investigators attend the St. Louis Basic Medicolegal Death Investigation course or an equivalent course approved by the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner within two years of appointment. Within five years of appointment, the investigator must obtain registry-level certification by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI).

The ABMDI is recognized at the state and federal levels as the only certification board for death

and under without known natural disease, persons under two years old dying from unknown causes or deaths from SIDS and many deaths of inmates.

The subspecialty of forensic pathology is recognized and certified by the ABP. Iowa's major forensic centers include IOSME, the Polk County Medical Examiner (PCME) and the University of Iowa. All three centers exclusively utilize ABP certified forensic pathologists.

Accreditation is a process by which an impartial organization (accrediting body) reviews a provider's policies and procedures to ensure that operations are being conducted in a manner consistent with national or international standards. Requirements include written procedures, safety standards, adequate facilities and onsite inspections. Accreditation applies to agencies, not individual practitioners.

The issue of accreditation was strongly emphasized

***“Accreditation and certification in forensics will continue to be a subject of discussion as the public pays more attention to high profile cases around the country.”***

investigators. Consequently, Iowa death investigators are already required to meet the anticipated federal mandates outlined in the NRC report. In Iowa, rules for pathologists who perform autopsies fall under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner. Certification for forensic pathologists is administered by the American Board of Pathology (ABP). There are other certification programs, but only the ABP program is recognized by professional societies and governmental agencies.

Iowa Administrative Code 641-127 states that autopsies performed on medical examiner cases must be performed by a pathologist trained or with experience in forensic pathology, licensed to practice in Iowa and board-certified by the American Board of Pathology, or under the direct supervision of a physician with these qualifications, unless an ME-3 form is submitted to the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner (IOSME) detailing the physician's qualifications to perform the autopsy.

Cases which **must** be autopsied by the IOSME include homicides, high profile deaths, persons 18

in the NRC report and is also the subject of pending federal legislation. The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) is the organization recognized to provide this function by the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) and multiple federal and state agencies. NAME, which accredits offices throughout America and as far away as Singapore, employs a rigorous inspection process by certified peer inspectors. Iowa currently has two NAME accredited facilities (IOSME and PCME). The University of Iowa, which recently remodeled and updated its facility, will apply for accreditation in 2015.

Accreditation and certification in forensics will continue to be a subject of discussion as the public pays more attention to high profile cases around the country. Iowa is well positioned to be a leader in these areas as potential government enforcement of quality is realized in the future. ♦

**Dr. Schmunk is Polk County Chief Medical Examiner and Dr. Goodin is Iowa State Chief Medical Examiner. Both are members of the IACME Board of Directors.**

# More scenes from the 2013 Fall Meeting



(From left) Dennis Klein, MD, IACME Program Chair, and John O'Connor, MD.



(From left) Marcus Nashelsky, MD; Stephanie McGaffin, Keith Hansen, DO and Gregory Schmunk, MD.



(From left) Kate Bengtson, Michael Hensch, F-ABMDI, Jagat Sandhu and Ashley Mills.

## 2014 Fall Meeting discussed

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representative and a public information officer discuss handling the media on high profile cases.

**Infectious disease deaths**—A discussion of issues raised by death from infectious disease, including reporting to the state and risks for first-responders.

Other possible topics include the latest trends in toxicology, death from blunt force trauma and protocol for identifying bodies. Many of the topics under consideration were suggested by attendees at last year's meeting.

The Board is also considering holding concurrent breakout sessions on Friday morning. One

## 2014 Calendar

### Skills Lab, Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner

June 20, 2014, IOSME Office, Ankeny

### IACME Fall Meeting and Education Expo

November 14-15, 2014

West Des Moines Marriott

November 13-14, 2015

West Des Moines Marriott

track would be the usual ME-101 course and the other would be more advanced topics suitable for experienced death investigators.

Watch your email for information about the final program. ♦

## IACME elections Nov. 14

**A**nnual elections for positions on the IACME Board of Directors are scheduled for Friday, November 14 in conjunction with the IACME Fall Meeting. Two members of the IACME Board are seeking reelection. They are Gregory Schmunk, MD, Polk County Medical Examiner and Michael Hensch, MA, F-ABMDI, Johnson County MEI Administrator. Both seats carry two-year terms that begin January 1, 2015.

Any IACME member interested in running for a board seat should contact Cheri Jensen at 515.957.9246 or by email at [meservices@q.com](mailto:meservices@q.com) by October 1. Your name will be forwarded to the Nominating Committee. ♦

### Iowa Association of County Medical Examiners

#### PRESIDENT

Daniel Cole, MD, Fort Dodge

#### VICE PRESIDENT

Paul Jensen, PharmD, MD, Cresco

#### SECRETARY-TREASURER

Dennis Crabb, MD, Denison

#### PAST PRESIDENT

Barbara Harre, MD, Davenport

#### BOARD MEMBERS

Thomas Carroll, MD, Sioux City

Sheila Holcomb, MD, LeMars

Dennis I. Mallory, DO, Toledo

Marcus Nashelsky, MD, Iowa City

Gregory Schmunk, MD, Des Moines

#### INVESTIGATOR BOARD MEMBER

Michael Hensch, MEI, Iowa City

#### EX-OFFICIO

Michele Catellier, MD, Des Moines

Julia Goodin, MD, Des Moines

Dennis Klein, MD, Des Moines

Jonathan Thompson, MD, Des Moines

#### ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Cheri Jensen

Chris McMahon Sutton

#### IACME

PO Box 554, Altoona, IA 50009

515.957.9246 (phone)

[meservices@q.com](mailto:meservices@q.com) (email)

[www.iacountyme.org](http://www.iacountyme.org) (web site)