BASIC STANDARDS FOR FELLOWSHIP TRAINING IN FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

American Osteopathic Association and American Osteopathic College of Pathologists

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SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

A. These are the basic standards for fellowship training in Forensic Pathology as approved by the American Osteopathic Association and the American Osteopathic College of Pathologists.

B. Satisfactory completion of the forensic pathology program shall lead to eligibility for examination by the American Osteopathic Board of Pathology. Candidates must follow the criteria for applications established by the individual certification boards.

SECTION II – MISSION

The mission of the fellowship training program in Forensic Pathology is to provide the osteopathic pathologist with advanced and concentrated training in Forensic Pathology and to prepare for examination leading to certification in Forensic Pathology.

SECTION III – EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM GOALS

Forensic Pathology is the subspecialty of pathology that involves the medicolegal investigation of death. The purpose of the forensic pathology program is to:

A. Provide extensive training in the investigation and identification of natural and unnatural causes of death in which there may be medicolegal aspects and ramifications.

B. Provide the opportunity for experience and development of expertise in all aspects of the medicolegal investigation of death including: clinical and scientific crime laboratories, medicolegal postmortem examinations, scene investigations, legal and court room proceedings, operation and management of a medical examiner’s office.

The forensic pathology fellowship shall also train to osteopathic Core Competencies. Expected skills and competencies required of fellows must be distributed to the fellow and faculty annually in either written or electronic form and reviewed at the start of each rotation.

1. Osteopathic Philosophy and OMT

   • Fellows are expected to demonstrate and apply knowledge of osteopathic medicine as appropriate to the specialty of forensic pathology. The intent is to encourage the osteopathic practitioner to continue a life-long dedication to learning and osteopathic principles.

2. Medical Knowledge

   • Fellows are expected to demonstrate and apply knowledge of accepted standards of clinical medicine to the field of forensic pathology by remaining current with new developments in medicine, including research.
3. Patient Care
   • Fellows are expected to demonstrate the ability to incorporate osteopathic philosophy into the provision of forensic services.

4. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
   • Fellows are expected to demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that enables them to establish and maintain professional relationships with other members of the medical and non-medical communities.

5. Professionalism
   • Fellows are expected to uphold the osteopathic oath in the conduct of their professional activities and adhere to ethical principles when collaborating with health professionals. Fellows should be sensitive to a diverse population, be cognizant of their own physical and mental health, and of patient safety issues.

6. Practice-Based Learning and Improvement
   • Fellows must demonstrate an ability to evaluate their methods of forensic practice and an understanding of research methods.

7. Systems-Based Practice
   • Fellows are expected to demonstrate an understanding of health care delivery systems in performance of a forensic examination.

SECTION IV – INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A. The institution shall maintain a medical library containing texts, latest editions of medical journals, online access to training materials and other appropriate publication pertaining to training of a forensic pathologist.

B. The institution shall provide the equipment, physical facilities and teaching faculty required to meet the objectives of a Forensic Pathology training program.

1. The institution must provide office space, meeting rooms and laboratory space to support teaching, educational, research and clinical service work.

2. The institution must provide microscopes, computers, photographic equipment and appropriate teaching files.

3. The institution must have on site or readily accessible an accredited laboratory the following services: microbiology, clinical chemistry, serology, subspecialty pathologists, radiology, forensic toxicology, physical anthropology, odontology, firearms examination, DNA matching and other scientific studies needed to complete a death investigation.
SECTION V – PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A. The fellowship program in forensic pathology shall be for a minimum of one year's duration.

B. The institution must conduct at least 500 medicolegal autopsies per fellow per year. Of these, 100 or more should be cases in which death is immediate (24 hours).

C. Each fellow should perform 250 to 300 autopsies in a given year of approved training and shall have experience in scene investigations, including examination of the body before it has been moved or disturbed.

D. Fellows shall have responsibility for performance of autopsies in cases likely to result in criminal prosecution or civil litigation.

E. Fellows shall have the opportunity to participate in legal follow up of cases in which they have participated.

F. Fellows shall have the opportunity to accompany staff pathologists when they give depositions or testify in court.

G. Blocks of time shall be allocated for the conduct of bacteriologic, biochemical and toxicologic studies, firearms, trace evidence, physical anthropology, odontology, and other areas necessary to ensure complete knowledge of postmortem investigation.

H. Those areas of forensic pathology not available in the primary training institution shall be made available and accessible to the fellow in other suitable laboratories or institutions.

SECTION VI – PROGRAM DIRECTOR/FACULTY REQUIREMENTS

A. Qualifications

1. The faculty shall consist of the program director and at least two full time board-certified forensic pathologists. Programs with two or more fellows must have at least one more faculty member than the number of approved fellows.

2. The program director must be certified in forensic pathology by the American Osteopathic Association through the American Osteopathic Board of Pathology or by the American Board of Pathology.

B. Responsibilities

1. The program director shall provide the fellow with all documents pertaining to the training program as well as the requirements for satisfactory completion of the program as established by the American Osteopathic Association and the American Osteopathic College of Pathologists.

   a. The program director must administer and maintain an educational environment conducive to educating fellows including the program structure, the faculty available for teaching and the documentation needed to maintain a certified/accredited fellowship.

   b. The program director and the faculty must, in aggregate, devote at least 20 hours per week to fellowship-related clinical work and teaching.
SECTION VII – FELLOW REQUIREMENTS

A. Fellows in forensic pathology must:

1. Be and remain members of the AOA and the specialty college during fellowship training.

2. Have satisfactorily completed a residency in anatomic pathology and laboratory medicine and possess either board certification/eligibility in one or both.

B. During the training program, the fellow must:

1. Submit a scientific paper and/or research project suitable for publication and pertaining to forensic pathology. Established guidelines shall be used in preparation of the paper.

2. Maintain a log recording each patient and procedure assigned, identified by the institution number. The log shall be submitted each quarter to the program director or director of medical education as appropriate and to the American Osteopathic College of Pathologists upon completion of the program for review and evaluation.

C. Advanced Standing

1. On individual consideration, experience in forensic pathology must be credited towards eligibility for “Training Complete” status. Substitution of experience for a formal training program will require recommendation and approval by the AOCP.

SECTION VIII – EVALUATION

A. The program director shall submit quarterly program reports to the director of medical education if appropriate. Annual reports shall be submitted to the American Osteopathic College of Pathologists.

B. During the fellowship program, the fellow must submit an annual report to the American Osteopathic College of Pathologists.