TEACHING AND RESEARCH

TEACHING

Pathology Residents: In addition to formal instruction of the Forensic Pathology Fellow, the Medical Examiner Office provides critical teaching rotations for Pathology Residents from both the UCSD School of Medicine and Naval Medical Center Balboa. Residents receive in-depth training in forensic and autopsy pathology under the direct supervision of Medical Examiner Office pathologists – training that is required for them to be eligible for Pathology board examinations. In 2010, 11 residents spent rotations ranging from two to six weeks at the Medical Examiner Office, performing a total of 142 cases under direct supervision, providing invaluable learning opportunities.

Additional instruction of Pathology Residents included ten formal lectures by our Deputy Medical Examiners (forensic pathologists) at UCSD Hillcrest's Department of Pathology on topics including gunshot wounds, sharp and blunt force injuries, asphyxia, electrical and thermal injuries, scuba and ocean deaths, medication/drug/poison-related deaths, and pregnancy-related deaths among others. These lectures have been part of the annual UCSD Pathology curriculum for many years, and will continue to be so in the years to come.

Teaching for the greater community: Medical Examiner Office staff including pathologists, investigators, and others gave 106 other presentations through 2010, with 179 hours of total teaching time split among topics and audiences such as safety stand-downs/drinking and driving for military personnel (United States Marine Corps Battalions, United States Navy (USN) Helicopter Squadrons, and USN submarine crews); awareness lectures for juvenile and adult Probationers; courses about the Medical Examiner Office for Probation Officers; forensic pathology topics for Cal Western Law School, University of San Diego, and Grossmont College; forensic pathology as a career for high school students; as well as many others. These presentations were given either at the new Medical Examiner facility or at the group locations throughout the county. They were intended to educate, inform, and minimize misconceptions about our function.

The Medical Examiner Office were able to allow 33 groups, including nursing students, law students, police cadets, paramedic students, and crime laboratory interns the opportunity to view an actual autopsy with narration and teaching by a pathologist as an invaluable educational opportunity. Student feedback from such opportunities was universally positive and appreciative, as they noted that viewing an autopsy showed them anatomy, function and

appreciation of the body, and forensic medicine in a way that simply cannot be taught in any other manner. Unfortunately, opportunities for approved groups to view an autopsy have been sharply curtailed for 2011 as budget and time constraints restrict what non-mission-critical activities the Medical Examiner Office is able to conduct.

RESEARCH INVOLVEMENT

Through the course of 2010, the Medical Examiner Office was involved in many different research opportunities. One of these involved our ongoing collaboration with research doctors and scientists at Rady Children's Hospital to provide research specimens to study associations and possible causes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), a multiyear project that has become one of the greatest contributors to the body of knowledge of this tragic issue.

Other research involvement has included donation of human brains, only in cases with full consent from families. In 2010 we sent human brains to the University of California, Irvine, for programs involving study of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression; the Allen Institute for Brain Science for the Human Brain Atlas project; the Veterans Administration Hospital for the Human Brain and Spinal Fluid Resource Center (http://www.loni.ucla.edu/uclabrainbank/); and UCSD Medical Center for research on methamphetamine addiction.