



Apply to be a  
NAME Member

Welcome to our International Colleagues on behalf of the entire NAME membership. It is with pleasure that we offer some insight into our association and encourage you to join us. We recommend that you visit our website ([www.thename.org](http://www.thename.org)) for membership information, categories of and benefits of membership. Especially note the International Page created especially for you, our international colleagues.

## **About NAME**

### **History:**

The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) is the national professional organization of physician medical examiners, medicolegal death investigators, and death investigation system administrators who perform the official duties of the medicolegal investigation of deaths of public interest in the United States. NAME was founded in 1966 with the dual purposes of fostering the professional growth of physician death investigators and disseminating the professional and technical information vital to the continuing improvement of the medical investigation of violent, suspicious and unusual deaths. Growing from a small nucleus of concerned physicians, NAME has expanded its scope to include physician medical examiners and coroners, medical death investigators and medicolegal system administrators from throughout the United States and other countries.

NAME members provide the expertise to medicolegal death investigation that is essential to the effective functioning of the civil and criminal justice systems. NAME is now the national forum for the interchange of professional and technical information in this important segment of public administration. NAME seeks to promote excellence in the day to day investigation of individual cases as well as to improve the interaction of death investigation systems with other agencies and political entities that interface with death investigation in each jurisdiction in this country.

The evolution of excellence in the medicolegal investigation of death in the United States has been slow and arduous. In many jurisdictions the medical aspects of death investigation remain relegated to personnel without medical training, or are performed by persons with little or no education in death investigation. NAME serves as a resource to individuals and jurisdictions seeking to improve medicolegal death investigation by continually working to develop and upgrade national standards for death investigation. The published NAME Standards for a Modern Medicolegal Investigative System provide a model for jurisdictions seeking to improve death investigation. NAME aims to involve competent professional medicolegal death investigators in every jurisdiction in the United States.

### **National and International Visibility**

NAME, as an association and through its members, maintains active cooperative relationships with the College of American Pathologists, American Society of Clinical Pathologists, American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and other professional organizations. NAME representatives participate and serve in an advisory capacity to federal, public, and private organizations on projects of mutual interest. As the

official specialty association of physician medical examiners, the NAME promotes its vision of competent national death investigation from a seat in the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association and on the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations.

NAME also wants to continue relationships with international forensic organizations, open avenues of communication, and coordinate global efforts in the area of medicolegal death investigation. NAME seeks international collaboration!

Equally important as standards for performance and the technical scientific knowledge which NAME imparts, is a concept for the administrative and operational aspects of death investigation systems. The educational functions of NAME are simultaneously directed towards the development and improvement of administratively efficient, cost effective death investigation systems. The Association serves as the national forum for medical death investigators and system administrators for the discussion and dissemination of such information. NAME further encourages members to participate in the training of law enforcement officers, allied health professionals, paramedical personnel, and others who interface with death cases.

### **Educational Opportunities**

The educational activities of NAME are carried out at the weeklong annual meeting each Fall. The meeting's didactic sessions provide instruction on subjects of medicolegal interest while the scientific sessions provide a platform for individual presentation of scientific studies and research in a peer review setting. Concurrent sessions are scheduled for medical investigators and administrators to discuss issues of mutual interest, share information and procedures, and present papers relating to the administrative and investigative functions of death investigation systems. The Association meets for an interim half day meeting each February in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. The journal of NAME, *Academic Forensic Pathology*, is an excellent source for the most current information on the practice of forensic pathology and medicolegal death investigation. The journal is available to all members. Educational opportunities are also available through committee service. All members are encouraged to participate, learn, and be an integral part of NAME!

### **Membership**

Membership in the National Association of Medical Examiners is open to all physicians, investigators, and administrators who are active in medicolegal death investigation. The categories vary based on individual role in death investigation. The NAME annual dues include a subscription to the Association's official journal, *Academic Forensic Pathology*, and access to NAME-L, an interactive and educational internet listserve. NAME also offers an International Corresponding Member category for those members practicing outside of the United States and Canada (see below).

Special International Corresponding Membership Category: NAME recently instituted a new category of membership specifically for those individuals practicing outside of the US and Canada. Specifically, the category description is as follows:

"International Corresponding Members" shall be physicians or other practicing medicolegal death investigators who reside outside of the United States of America or Canada. International Corresponding Members shall be forensic pathologists, physician medical examiners, physician coroners, and those engaged in the teaching or practice of legal medicine, provided, however, that the foregoing examples are provided for clarity, and mere possession of any of the foregoing job titles does not automatically qualify any individual for membership as an International Corresponding Member, nor does lack of such title automatically disqualify any individual who is a practicing medicolegal death investigator."

International corresponding members pay lower annual dues, have access to the NAME journal, *Academic Forensic Pathology*, and can serve on NAME committees.

NAME aims to enhance global forensic pathology and medicolegal death investigation, education, and collaboration. NAME welcomes continuous communication with international forensic organizations and hopes that you will convey this message to your home country! Communication is key!

## **Leadership**

The work of NAME is carried out by individuals and committees under the direction of its Officers and a Board of Directors elected by the membership. An Executive Committee is responsible for the fiscal affairs and management of the Association. Standing committees deal with issues of membership and credentials, education, program and publications, ethics, standards, inspection and accreditation, and finance. All members are encouraged to participate in committee activities. A permanent Executive Director and part time Executive Vice-President provide yearlong administrative support.

## **Inspection and Accreditation (I&A)**

As part of its mission to improve the quality of death investigation nationally and to recognize excellence in death investigation systems, the NAME offers a voluntary inspection and accreditation program for medicolegal death investigative offices. This program is designed to offer expert evaluation and peer recommendations for improvement of functioning offices. Accreditation by NAME is an honor and significant achievement for an office. It signifies to the public that the office is performing at a high level of competence and public service. NAME also offers consultative services for jurisdictions seeking to establish medicolegal death investigation systems and for political entities wishing to evaluate death investigation systems under their administrative purview. Well-known and respected globally, NAME also extends its inspection and accreditation expertise internationally to medicolegal death investigative offices.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **1) What is a difference between a coroner and a medical examiner in the United States:**

#### **Coroner**

Historically, the coronial system was attributed to the reign of English King Henry II in 1194. The coronial system was developed to “consolidate government functions, check the growing power of the sheriff, and to raise revenue for the Crown” (Jentzen 2009). Coronial duties included magisterial and judicial. In some parts of the world, this system exists and is the functioning death investigation system. It includes death investigations for the purposes of the judicial system and the medical public health functions. Coroners in these jurisdictions may also oversee public inquests as needed.

In the US, the coronial system was adopted initially and was followed by development of the medical examiner system. Coroners in the US are elected officials whose responsibility is to ensure documentation of death, a cause of death, and death certification. Coroners in the US may or may not be medical doctors, are elected to fulfill their mandate for defined periods of time, and may be voted out of office.

Outside of the US, some systems have appointed coroners who may or may not be medical doctors.

#### **Medical Examiner:**

Medical Examiners (Forensic Pathologists) in the death investigation system are physicians, usually trained pathologists, who have received formal training and certification. Pathologists are trained and certified in anatomic pathology or combined anatomic/clinical pathology. This is followed by training in an approved program for forensic pathology and board certification in forensic pathology. Typically, Medical Examiners are hired, not elected.

### Forensic Medical Practitioners

Internationally there is another group of doctors whose tasks include examination of victims of crime and criminals incarcerated by the legal authorities. These physicians are typically referred to as forensic medicine specialists. Some Medical Examiners perform this role.

#### **2) What course(s) does one need to study in order to be a Board Certified Forensic Pathologist?**

To become a forensic pathologist in the US requires successful completion of a medical doctor or doctor of osteopathy degree (MD or DO), followed by a residency program in an accredited program in anatomic or combined anatomic/clinical pathology (with certification examination), followed by formal forensic pathology fellowship program of at least 1 year duration and followed by a certification examination process. The examinations in the US are administered by the American Board of Pathology ([www.abpath.org](http://www.abpath.org)). Individuals from other countries need to verify the needs for certification in their home jurisdiction. Newly trained forensic pathologists are expected to demonstrate continued maintenance of competency and certification by an examination every 10 years.

#### **3) My professor of legal medicine advises me to visit a US medical examiner's office. Whom should I contact?**

Choices are available

- If you know a Chief Medical Examiner of a jurisdiction, apply directly to that individual.
- Visit the International page on the NAME website for a list of offices that welcome and have the ability to accommodate international visitors and trainees.

#### **4) I am medical student and would like to rotate through a medical examiner's office. How do I arrange this?**

Many medical examiner's offices are affiliated with an academic institution (university), so this is relatively easy as most medical schools in the US and Canada have a system of well-established training electives. Many academic institutions have a defined electives office which will facilitate. It is also helpful to contact the local ME office of interest for their direction to facilitate this experience.

#### **5) I am currently working at the "medical examiner" office in my home country and would like to come to the US to continue working as a medical examiner. What steps should I take?**

Application to the posted jobs available and advertised on the NAME website is an excellent way to begin the process. The candidate will need to explore state boards of medicine for licensing requirements of the jurisdiction. Additionally, immigration into the US will be needed so various visa requirements are met. This information is available through the American Embassy in the home nation, but the university to which the medical examiner's office is affiliated may offer some practical assistance.

#### **6) Will my training outside of the US be credited toward the American Board of Pathology forensic pathology board certification?**

The applicant not only will need their forensic credentials evaluated but also the basic training credentials (ie anatomic pathology/ clinical pathology). The applicant should check with the American Board of Pathology ([www.abpath.org](http://www.abpath.org)) to determine if training and certification meet with the board accreditation. If it does not comply, then there would likely be a need to apply for some retraining or individual case consideration for the purpose of credential recognition. Some universities will be able to facilitate this with academic appointments but generally this is utilized for those individuals who are well-recognized internationally and can be brought in as a full professor.

### **Resources:**

- 1) A valuable resource for the history of death investigation in America can be found in the following publication:

Death Investigation in America. Coroners, Medical Examiners and the Pursuit of Medical Certainty. Jeffery M. Jentzen. Harvard University Press. 2009.

- 2) NAME website:  
<https://netforum.avectra.com/eweb/StartPage.aspx?Site=name&WebCode=HomePage>
- 3) National Association of Medical Examiners [www.thename.org](http://www.thename.org)
- 4) American Board of Pathology [www.abpath.org](http://www.abpath.org)
- 5) College of American Pathologists [www.cap.org](http://www.cap.org)