

Addressing the Forensic Pathology Shortage in the United States: Empowering International Forensic Pathologists to Bridge the Gap



A perspective from the NAME Visa Applicant Advisory Committee

Visa Applicant Advisory Committee (VAAC) Members

- Clare Bryce, MD (Chair)
- Lorenzo Gitto, MD (Co-Chair)
- Anfisa Baiandurova, MD
- Kim Collins, MD
- Masahiko Kobayashi, MD, PhD
- Anita Lal, MD
- Mario Rascon, MD
- Jesus Rico-Castillo, MD
- Julian Samuel, MBBS
- Ilaria Tarozzi, MD



Contributor Biographies



Dr. Clare Bryce is the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner at the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office in Reno, Nevada and is a practicing forensic neuropathologist. She hails from the United Kingdom where she completed her medical degree at the University of Leeds School of Medicine in Yorkshire. She completed an Anatomic and Clinical Pathology residency in Ohio, a Forensic Pathology fellowship at Cook County Medical Examiner in Chicago and a Neuropathology fellowship at New York University and Mount Sinai Hospitals in New York. Dr. Bryce has a strong interest in pathology education and addressing workforce shortages by facilitating training and employment of international pathology graduates in the US



Dr. Lorenzo Gitto is a forensic pathologist with board certifications in Legal Medicine (Italy) and Anatomic and Forensic Pathology (United States). He serves as an Assistant Medical Examiner and Research Director at the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office in Chicago. Dr. Gitto is a fellow member of the National Association of Medical Examiners and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. His academic background include numerous publications, research awards, editorial roles in forensic pathology journals, active participation as a speaker and moderator at global conferences. Dr. Gitto actively addresses workforce shortages by supporting the training and employment of international doctors in the US.



Anfisa Baiandurova, MD is an Assistant Medical Examiner at the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office in Chicago. She earned her medical degree in Russia, completed her Anatomic and Neuropathology residency in Portland, Oregon, and pursued fellowship training in Forensic Pathology in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dr. Baiandurova is a passionate advocate for international medical graduates, serving as a member of the Visa Advisory Committee at NAME and as Secretary of the American Society of Russian-Speaking Pathologists.



Dr. Kim A. Collins is a Forensic Pathologist, board certified in Anatomic Pathology, Clinical Pathology, and Forensic Pathology. She currently practices with Newberry Pathology Group in Newberry, SC where she performs postmortem investigations, examinations, and autopsies. On a state and national level, she has served as Chair of the College of American Pathologists Autopsy Committee, President of the South Carolina Society of Pathologists, Chair of the Pathology Biology section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, President of NAME, and Chair of the NAME Board of Directors. She is currently President of the NAME Foundation and Chair of the International Relations Committee



Dr Anita Lal worked as a staff forensic pathologist in Toronto at the Provincial Forensic Pathology unit from 2013 to 2024 with a cross appointment as a Clinical Lecturer at the University of Toronto. She obtained her medical degree (2005) at Ross University in the West Indies. She then completed her residency training in anatomical and clinical pathology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and Fellowship in forensic pathology at the Wayne County Medical Examiner's office also located in Detroit. Dr. Lal joined the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Calgary Alberta as an Assistant Chief Medical Examiner in July 2011 with a cross appointment as a clinical assistant professor at the faculty of medicine, University of Calgary.



Dr. Mario Rascon is the Chief Medical Examiner for El Paso County, TX. His training/education include The University of Chihuahua (Medical School), the Northwell Health System (Pathology Residency), the University of New Mexico (Forensic Pathology Fellowship), and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (Master in Health Care Management).a



Dr. Jesus Rico-Castillo is a board-certified forensic pathologist at the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences in Houston, Texas, where he conducts medicolegal autopsies and provides expert analysis in death investigations. He earned his medical degree from the University of Los Andes (Venezuela), completed anatomic pathology residency at Thomas Jefferson University (Pennsylvania), and a forensic pathology fellowship at the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences. Dr. Rico collaborates with law enforcement, legal professionals, and public health officials, and contributes to education through lectures and workshops. He is a Fellow of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) and a member of the Visa Applicant Advisory Committee.



Dr. Julian Samuel is an Assistant Medical Examiner at the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences in Houston, Texas. He is board certified and completed his forensic pathology, and forensic cardiovascular and neuropathology fellowships at the New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner, New York.

He is a fellow of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), member of the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, and a member of the Medicolegal Death Investigation-International Community of Practice (MLDI-ICOP).



Dr. Ilaria Tarozzi earned her medical degree and completed her residency in Legal Medicine and Forensic Pathology in Italy. She has been an International Corresponding Member of the National Association of Medical Examiners since 2022 and an Associate Member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences since 2024. She is a first-year Anatomic and Clinical Pathology Resident at Brown University (Providence, RI) and actively collaborates on research activities in the U.S. and her home country.



Dr. John Walsh is currently serving as the Group surgeon for Naval Construction Group TWO. He is board certified in AP/CP and FP. He is an Assistant Professor of Pathology with the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and is actively engaged with University of Mississippi Medical Center Pathology residency.

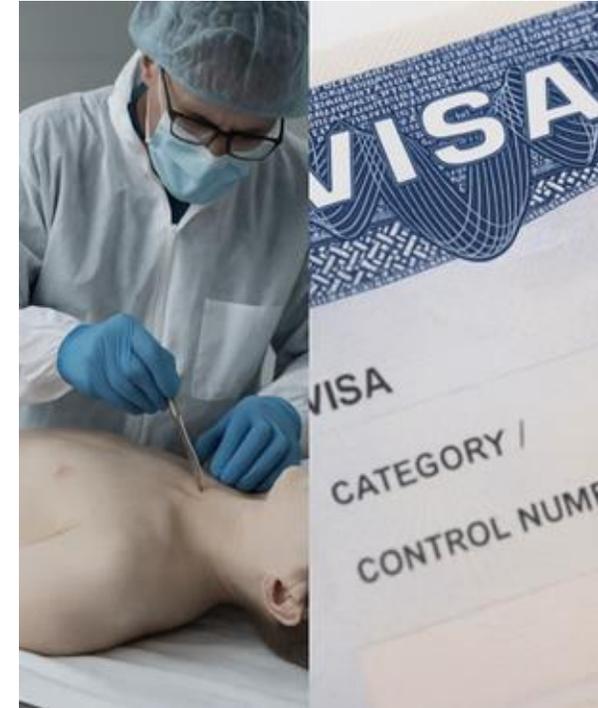
Forensic Pathology

- **Training Pathway:** Forensic pathology, recognized as a subspecialty in 1959 by the American Board of Pathology, requires completion of pathology training plus a forensic pathology fellowship. Outside the U.S., it may be a distinct specialty through dedicated residencies in legal medicine or forensic pathology.
- **International Medical Graduates (IMG):** Physicians fully trained abroad must repeat U.S. training (at least a pathology residency and forensic pathology fellowship) adding a minimum of four additional years before board certification.
- **Visa & Career Progression:** Most foreign graduates train on J-1 visas, subject to the “*two-year home residency*” requirement (Section 212[e]). A waiver enables transition to H-1B status, requiring three years with the sponsoring office. The H-1B can be renewed up to six years, after which applicants must pursue a Green Card.



Purpose

- ❖ Provide practical solutions to integrate trained forensic pathologists into the U.S. workforce to address the current critical shortage.
- ❖ This workshop is intended for
 - International medical graduates and pathologists interested in pursuing a career in forensic pathology in the U.S.,
 - Fellowship program directors and Chief Medical Examiners/Coroners who wish to better understand the complex immigration regulations to facilitate hiring foreign medical graduates.
- ❖ The presenters serve on the NAME Visa Applicant Advisory Committee and are personally engaged in visa application processes. They will provide info on:
 - Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) process for residency and fellowship applications;
 - Available visa and Green Card options and related aspects.



NAME Visa Applicant Advisory Committee

The Visa Applicant Advisory Committee serves as a resource for non-citizen pathologists who are seeking to train and/or practice as a forensic pathologist in the US. Committee members are also available to respond to visa-related queries that NAME receives and share their experiences of the immigration process with colleagues facing visa and immigration issues. We also work closely with the International Relations Committee. Those with visa-related questions can contact us via name@thename.org.



Why is the topic relevant now? (1)

- **Shortage of forensic pathologists in the U.S.:** Many ME/C offices struggle to fill positions, impacting medicolegal death investigation capacity and public safety.
- **Need for increased recruitment:** Awareness of visa pathways can help attract both U.S. medical students and international graduates to forensic pathology.
- **Support for international medical graduates (IMGs):** Understanding visa options helps IMGs navigate complex immigration requirements and reduces barriers to joining the workforce.
- **Institutional challenges:** Sponsoring ME/C offices need guidance on visa regulations to effectively recruit and retain qualified candidates.

Why is the topic relevant now? (2)

- **Long-term workforce planning:** Knowledge of visa pathways supports sustainable staffing strategies, ensuring continuity of forensic services nationwide.
- **Diversity and global expertise:** Visa options allow recruitment of highly skilled international pathologists, bringing diverse perspectives and expertise to the field.
- **Mitigating regional disparities:** Certain areas of the U.S. are chronically understaffed; understanding visas helps place pathologists where they are most needed.

Intended audience and benefits

- **ME/C Offices:** Streamlines recruitment; ensures workforce continuity; reduces legal risk.
- **Chiefs / Human Resources:** Clarifies visa types & timelines; promotes and supports workforce planning; smooths onboarding.
- **County/Admin Staff:** Learn the process; simplifies sponsorship processes; ensures regulatory compliance.
- **Current IMG Resident and Fellows:** Provides clear pathways; reduces uncertainty; facilitates career entry.
- **IMG / Organizations / Policy Makers:** Encourages FP recruitment; informs policies and workforce planning.

International Relations Committee

We are here for you!

Dr. Collins

Benefits for International Colleagues:

- **Committee dedicated to international members**
- **Assistance from colleagues**
- **Your voice in NAME**
- **Discounted membership & meeting fees**
- **“Buddy Program” & Reception**
- **Committee participation opportunities**
- **Access to forensic expertise**
- **AJFMP access**
- **NAME webinars**
- **International Newsletter**
- **Global Database access**
- **NAME Foundation support & AFPj**

NAME Workforce Committee

Dr. Walsh

- **CURRENT:** 760 fulltime FPs nationally / ~160 part time
- **901 FPs** - Calculated Minimum Needed
- **40 FP** matched/year (average - Match 2023-2025)
- Data from workshop presented at NAME in 2024
- **Current recruitment levels** will exacerbate workforce shortage (*shortage will worsen over time*)
- **2054** - MAXIMUM recruitment (70+) would meet “low” demand

ECFMG Sponsorship

Dr. Tarozzi

- The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates Certification evaluates the qualifications of IMGs aiming to enter the U.S. healthcare system.
- **ECFMG Certification** is necessary to join an ACGME-accredited residency program, which is the first stage of clinical training for IMGs in the U.S.
- Once matched to a Residency Program, IMGs must apply for ECFMG Sponsorship for J1-Visa.
- If approved, ECFMG Sponsorship is valid for **1 year** from the first day of training and must be periodically renewed.

J-1 Visa and the J-1 visa waiver process

Dr. Rascon

- Most IMG's train under a J-1 visa
- **Conrad-30 program** = Switch J-1 to H1b
- **Waiver** to home residency requirement from J-1 visa
- H1b visa has path to permanent resident status (**green card**)
- Apply using employment based (EB) categories 1-5
- Understanding the process by applicants and employers is paramount to fight the shortage.

H-1B visa (Common pathway by IMGs) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) (1)

Drs Baiandurova and Rico

H1B

- Requires employer sponsorship
- Sponsored by some residency programs (though fewer than J-1)
- No 2-year home residency rule (unlike J-1)
- Renewable for up to 6 years
- Allows direct transition to green card

TPS

- Granted by the U.S. government available to nationals of certain countries
- TPS provides legal residence and work authorization in the U.S.
- TPS works as a bridge when transitioning in between different status Ex: waiting J1, H1b, asylum or green card

H-1B visa (Common pathway by IMGs) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) (2)

Drs Baiandurova and Rico

Feature	H1B Visa	TPS
Type	Work visa	Humanitarian status
Who qualifies	Professionals with employer sponsorship	Nationals of designated countries
Duration	3–6 years	Renewable, based on designation
Work authorization	Only with sponsoring employer	Open, any employer
Path to residency	Possible with sponsorship	Not direct

01 Visa

Drs Samuel and Lal

- The O1 visa category encompasses the **nonimmigrant visa** for individuals with *extraordinary ability* in sciences, education, business, arts, or athletics
 - for doctors, this means medicine and clinical practice fall squarely within the scope of O-1A.
- Extraordinary ability = you're among the **top few percent** in your field, with sustained national or international recognition (*virtually ALL FPs qualify...*)

Benefits

- **Bypasses J-1 home residency rule:** Even if you trained in the U.S. on a J-1, you can get an O-1 without completing the two-year return requirement.
- **No annual cap** — unlike H-1B visas.
- **Indefinite renewals** in one-year increments tied to ongoing work.
- **Flexibility** to work at multiple facilities (with proper amendments).
- **Qualifying criteria overlap with EB1A**, which allows self-petition and skips labor certification

EB1 visas

Dr. Gitto

Category	EB1-A: Extraordinary Ability	EB1-B: Outstanding Professors & Researchers	EB1-C: Multinational Executives & Managers
Labor Certification	Not required	Not required	Not required
Self-Petition	Permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted
Key Requirements	Demonstrated extraordinary ability in sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics; entering the U.S. to continue work in the same field; must provide significant benefit to the U.S.	International recognition for outstanding achievements; at least 3 years of teaching or research experience; permanent job offer in a tenured, tenure-track, or comparable research role	At least 1 year of managerial or executive experience abroad within the last 3 years with an affiliated company; entering the U.S. to work in a managerial or executive position

NIW (EB-2)

Dr. Gitto

Details	
What is “National Interest”?	Refers to work that addresses critical issues such as public health, environmental challenges, or technological advancements, enhances U.S. economic growth, innovation, or global competitiveness, and provides benefits that extend beyond local or regional levels to impact the country as a whole; applicants must show that their proposed work aligns with these national interests to justify waiving the job offer and labor certification requirements.
Purpose	Allows self-petition for permanent residency without a job offer or labor certification for work of substantial merit and national importance
Eligibility	- Advanced degree (or equivalent) OR - Exceptional ability in sciences, arts, or business - Work must benefit the U.S.
“Three-Prong Test” (<i>Matter of Dhanasar</i>)	1. Proposed endeavor has substantial merit & national importance 2. Applicant is well-positioned to advance the endeavor 3. Waiving job offer/labor certification benefits the U.S.

Tips for MEO/Coroner Offices to hire eligible international Forensic Pathologists

Dr. Samuel

- Have an open, transparent dialogue with the prospective FP and office's human resources/legal department about immigration needs and options available
- Work with the FP immigration lawyer, if available
- Consider retaining an immigration lawyer who works with doctors (at a minimum), preferably pathologists who can guide office through current environment (O-1/H-1B/EB-1/EB-2 experience)
- If no international FPs hired prior, engage stakeholders of the need for potential funding (County administrators/ State Department of Health)
- Be patient and flexible, especially now

Facilitating entry of Trained FPs into the US System

Dr. Bryce

- Increase awareness of the US shortage of forensic pathologists among the international pathology community, and possibilities for training and employment in US - networking and presentations at major pathology and forensic pathology meetings e.g. NAME, AAFS, CAP.
- Recognition of forensic pathology as a direct patient care specialty, eligible for CONRAD 30 waivers. State and local health officials should include Forensic Pathology on waiver lists.
- Educating applicants and ME offices on communication and paperwork requirements needed.
- Educating policymakers on need for non-US IMGs to address FP workforce shortages.
- Useful resources:
- *ASTHO Brief: addressing Forensic Pathologist Shortages: Visas. September 2021*
- *J. Ramos, P. Aung. International Medical Graduates and the Shortage of US Pathologists: Challenges and Opportunities. Arch Pathol and Lab Med. Vol 148 Issue 6 June 2024*

Tips for FMGs who want to pursue a career in the US

Dr. Tarozzi

- Get US experience (observerships, clinical rotations)
- Get exposure to US forensic pathology community (meetings, research projects)
- Study carefully the requirements, relying only on official sources
- Keep constantly updated: immigration law can change and so the criteria IMGs must fulfill
- The immigration process can be challenging: consult an immigration lawyer specialized in foreign medical graduates for guidance
- Ask questions: the NAME and its Committees are available to provide help and support

Introduction to upcoming Webinar

Drs Gitto and Bryce

- The full workshop will be offered as a **virtual webinar**.
- Intended audience: ME/Coroner Offices, Chiefs/Human resources, County/Admin staff, Current IMGs - residents and fellows, IMG organizations and policymakers.
- All speakers will present their topics, providing **detailed information** on each.