

# **Post-mortem Examination**

**A medical examination of the  
dead body conducted in  
accordance with the laws of  
the state**

- Types

- Clinical /hospital autopsy

- Forensic /medicolegal autopsy

- Psychological autopsy

# CLINICAL AUTOPSY

- Performed with the consent of the deceased person's relative
- **Purpose**
  - Providing correlation of clinical diagnosis and clinical symptoms
  - Determining the effectiveness of therapy
  - Study natural course of disease process
  - Educating students and physicians
- This type of autopsy should not be held to determine the nature of fatal cause

# MEDICO-LEGAL AUTOPSY

responsible for the investigation of

- sudden
- suspicious
- Obscure
- unnatural
- or frank criminal deaths

# Inquest

Inquiry into the cause of death

# Inquest

- help to determine the cause of a person's death
- Conducted by judge, jury ,or government official

# Indication for inquest

- ❖ Sudden death
- ❖ Suicide
- ❖ Homicide
- ❖ Infant death
- ❖ Drugs/poisons
- ❖ Abortion
- ❖ Operational deaths
- ❖ Allegation of medical negligence
- ❖ Industrial accidents
- ❖ Road accidents
- ❖ Domestic accidents
- ❖ Death in custody

# PURPOSE OF MEDICO-LEGAL INVESTIGATION OF DEATH

- Investigation of medical aspects of certain deaths.
- Citizens rights.
- Statistics.



# **Systems of death investigation**

- **Coroner system**
- **Medical Examiner system**
- **Police system**
- **Continental system**

- Medical Examiner system in the USA.
- Coroner system of England and Wales.
- Procurator Fiscal system of Scotland.

# MEDICAL EXAMINER SYSTEM

- Prevalent in some states of USA
  - medical person appointed to hold an inquest
  - determine cause and manner of death
  - No power to summon witness and examine them under oath
  - Submit report to District Attorney

# Jurisdiction of Medical Examiner

# Coroner

- under the Local Government Act 1972.
- Most are Solicitors or Medical Practitioner of at least five years standing.
- The role of the Coroner is to investigate sudden deaths and to hold inquests where appropriate.

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- As a general rule all Inquests are held in public to which the press and all members of the public are entitled to be present and witness the proceedings.
- He receives reports and statements.

# ROLE OF CORONER IN INVESTIGATION

- He can order a post mortem examination.
- He may certify the cause of death as determined by the post mortem.
- Following the autopsy he may decide to hold an inquest. Inquests must always be held when death is due to an unnatural event.

# Jury

- There are some circumstances in which the summing of a Jury is compulsory:-
  - Jury is comprised of between 7 and 11 members taken from the Crown Court Jury List.
- The Coroner may accept a majority verdict providing not more than two Jury members disagree.



# Procurator Fiscal

Procurator Fiscal is appointed by the Lord Advocate and is always a Lawyer.

- The Procurator Fiscal prosecutes in the Sheriff Courts and District Courts.
- Has wide powers in the investigation of criminal matters.
- He requests for autopsy to be performed by a forensic pathologist

# Duty of the procurator fiscal

- **It is the duty of the Procurator Fiscal to enquire into certain categories of death**
  - Ensure that full and accurate statistics are compiled
  - Secure and preserve evidence relevant to the rights of interested parties

- When all the information necessary is to hand, **the Fiscal will decide on the need for an autopsy.**
- If the Procurator Fiscal is satisfied that death is due to natural causes and that there is no element of criminality or negligence, he will invite the GP or hospital doctor to issue a death certificate.

- **DEATHS REPORTABLE AFTER INVESTIGATION BY THE FISCAL TO THE CROWN OFFICE**

# CONTINENTAL SYSTEM

provision for sudden and unexplained death

- Only those subjected to investigation in which foul play is suspected
- No identifiable executive officer
- Criminal death reported to the police

## MODIFIED CONTINENTAL SYSTEM

sudden and unexplained deaths are not investigated

- Section 174 of criminal procedure code empowers the area police to investigate suicide homicide and deaths due to accidents

# LEGAL AUTHORIZATION IN PAKISTAN

## LEGAL AUTHORIZATION IN PAKISTAN -[\(Contd\)](#)

**dead body of any person who has already been interred (buried), the magistrate under section 176(2) of the Criminal Procedure Code of Pakistan, may cause the body to be disinterred and examine in order to discover the cause of death.**



# MAGISTRATE INQUEST

- Death of a person in police custody
- During interrogation
- Police shooting or killing

# Purpose of magistrate inquest

# Objectives of PME

- **Identification of victims**
- **Identification of accused /criminal**
- **Identification of suspect weapon**
- **Document cause and nature of injuries**
- **Determine the cause of death**
- **Determine time since death**

- **Identification of motives**
- **Documenting evidence for corroboration of facts/events/statements**
- **Forensic reconstruction of events**
- **Determine manner of death**
- **Separating death due to disease from death due to external causes**
- **Provide factual objective medical report for law enforcement ,prosecution and defense agencies**

# PRELIMINARIES FOR AUTOPSY

legal authority in respect of particular dead body to perform autopsy

- Copies of inquest report
- FIR
- In hospital deaths, a copy of case sheet of the deceased person

# **Stages of a Forensic PME**

- 1 Examination at the scene of death**
- 2 Examination in the PM Room**
- 3 Revisiting the scene of Death**