

Development of Guidelines in Forensic Medicine in the Nordic countries

Druid H^{1,4*}, Byström E⁴, Eriksson A^{2,4}, Kahn L^{1,4}, Wingren CJ^{3,4}

*henrik.druid@ki.se

¹ Dept of Oncology-Pathology, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

² Dept of Community Medicine and Rehabilitation, Umeå university, Umeå, Sweden

³ Dept of Forensic Medicine, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

⁴ Swedish Society for Forensic Medicine

In forensic autopsy casework, the examinations performed during an autopsy will be adapted to the context of the case to answer the relevant questions at hand. To assure the quality of the examination, and in extension to secure the rule of law, there is a need for professional guidelines establishing the state of the art procedures to be used in each case. Such guidelines specifies the recommended approach to the autopsy, including auxiliary analyses, and need to have a solid foundation in the professional forensic community. Producing high quality state of the art procedures is, however, demanding and time-consuming, and requires the work of a critical mass of experts.

The Swedish Society for Forensic Medicine set out to examine if and how the Nordic countries work with forensic autopsy guidelines, by inquiring representatives of the national societies/representatives for forensic medicine in Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland.

In Sweden and Finland, national agencies are responsible for forensic case work. The development of autopsy procedures is in Sweden centralized to the National Board of Forensic Medicine, in Finland to the Institute for Health and Welfare. In Denmark, forensic case work is the responsibility of the universities, in turn delegated to regional chief forensic pathologists. It is the responsibility of each chief forensic pathologist to establish procedures that guarantee the quality of forensic case work. Such work is performed either locally at each forensic institute, or nationally by appointed forensic experts. In Norway and Iceland, performance of forensic autopsies is the duty of the university hospitals. Also Norway has work in progress regarding guidelines regarding certain areas of expertise. All inquired national representatives endorsed inter-nordic cooperation to publish systematic reviews and develop general guidelines.

The Swedish Society for Forensic Medicine suggests joint venture projects to increase the Nordic co-operation in the development of state of the art procedures in forensic medicine. Using this platform we aim at initiating discussions on how such collaborative work between the Nordic countries can be performed, despite the various forms of forensic organization across the countries.