

MDI CONNECT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:

MEDICAL EXAMINER AND FORENSIC SERVICES AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, HOMER STRYKER, M.D. SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Background: Medical Examiner and Forensic Services at Western Michigan University, Homer Stryker, M.D. School of Medicine (WMed) serves twelve counties in Michigan as the medical examiner and provides forensic science consultation services to multiple other counties in Michigan and Indiana. In 2022, WMed accepted cases for 4,884 reported deaths, with 3,770 deaths investigated and 1,626 postmortem exams of which 1,245 were complete autopsies.

Description of Project: The main objective of this project is to design and develop a synoptic autopsy reporting system. The envisioned project addresses the drug overdose epidemic in the United States by modernizing the MDI autopsy data process. A key challenge is improving the quality and efficiency of autopsy reports without simply presenting them as data lists. The proposed solution involves creating a synoptic autopsy report system that attempts to standardize data entry through the development of commonly used medical descriptions, terms and cause of death statements. As part of their project, WMed will develop, pilot and test their system. This will be followed by refinement and broader implementation with plans for upscaling and user training. WMed also plans to evaluate their project and disseminate any lessons learned to the broader MDI community.



BENEFITS

- Allows for more consistent reporting for cause of death
- Enables medical examiners and coroners to explore, research and analyze the data they collect
- Statistics on drug-related deaths and other deaths of interest (firearms, drowning, in-custody, etc.) can be collected within the case management system
- Future benefit of time needed for autopsy reporting and report process reduced



CHALLENGES

- Some of the terms and acronyms selected for use in the synoptic report system build were already in use for other parts of the CMS
- Conducting beta testing of the reporting system with a selected set of age-defined autopsies was too limiting and needed to be expanded

Acronyms: • **MDI** – Medicolegal Death Investigation • **CMS** – Case Management System
• **HL7** – Health Level 7 • **FHIR** – Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources

About MDI Connect: MDI Connect is a joint initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Collaborating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners (COMEC) and the CDC Foundation. Through MDI Connect, medical examiner and coroner offices work together to enhance data sharing between their offices and public health, toxicology or other agencies. MDI Connect is a collaborative learning environment where MDI offices, data sharing partners, vendors and Fast Healthcare Interoperability (FHIR®) subject matter experts can work together to modernize MDI data practices and work towards interoperability. The goal of this collaborative is to create reusable tools and approaches that will reduce data entry efforts, reduce efforts exchanging data with others and increase access to information for office functioning and research. **For more information visit, MDIconnecthub.org**