

**TITLE:** Death Matters: Factors Influencing Information Used in Death Investigation

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**STUDENT SUBMISSION:** Yes

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Policy Makers and Researchers

**ABSTRACT:** Background/Purpose: US public health and criminal justice systems are affected by the quality of data obtained about death, and many other social and scientific processes rely upon death investigation information. Yet, little research has focused on how death investigations are conducted. A variety of sources may be utilized during death investigation, but the body and the scene are essential. Our study aims were to determine the proportion of deaths in which medicolegal representatives directly examined bodies and scenes, and assess factors associated with death investigators examining bodies and scenes. Methods: We extracted 2018-2021 data from MDILog, a web-based death investigation case management system, at two county-level death investigation offices in the US (n=12,368). Descriptive statistics and logistic regression models were used to investigate factors associated with examination of bodies and scenes. Results: Preliminary findings indicate that investigators examined the scenes in less than 50% and the bodies in less than 40% of reported cases. Additional findings from the evaluation of factors associated with examining bodies and scenes will be presented. Implications: Our results will contribute to a foundation on which to build a more consistent and rigorous national response to this critical public health and public safety function.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Explain the public health importance of information recorded on US death certificates. List essential sources of information utilized during the process of death investigation. Discuss the factors associated with death investigators examining bodies and scenes.

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