



Investigating Unexpected Death: Values and Attitudes in Coronial Autopsies

Information Sheet

My name is Dr Imogen Jones and I am an academic based at the University of Leeds. I am currently conducting some research funded by the Leverhulme Trust. This project, entitled 'Investigating Unexpected Death: Values and Attitudes in Coronial Autopsies' aims to explore the factors which influence the practice of coronial pathologists and anatomical pathology technologists in carrying out coronial autopsies.

I am writing to you to ask you to consider participating in this research. Before you decide whether you wish to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please do feel able to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The background to the research

As you will be aware, the potential inadequacies of the coronial autopsy service were noted by the 3rd Report of the Shipman Enquiry in 2003 and the NCEPOD's 2006 investigation into coronial autopsies. It was also highlighted as being under resourced in the 2015 Hutton Review, especially in comparison to suspicious death investigations. This, it is feared, could lead to a disparity in the way that deceased bodies are treated during the autopsy process. These concerns need to be investigated. If found to be accurate, the reasons for this should to be identified and problematised. By carrying out a series of interviews with pathologists who conduct coronial autopsies and the APTs who work with them, I hope to begin to unpack and evaluate the relative merits of the coronial autopsy process. I also aim to understand the what beliefs and attitudes inform the coronial autopsy process.

This is an opportunity for you to share your experiences and have your say on what you think of the coronial autopsy process. It is hoped that this research will have the potential to inform decisions by policy makers and to direct future research.

What is involved?

I have contacted you because you are an APT who assists with coronial autopsies. Hearing about the experiences of people within your profession is crucial to the objectives of the research. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

I would like to come to your workplace (or any other location convenient for you) to interview you. Interviews will last for up to an hour. I will ask you questions which will be guided by the following themes, although am also keen to be led by the experiences and views of those I am interviewing:

1. How do APTs understand their role in death investigation?
2. What are the attitudes of APTs towards deceased bodies and the autopsy process?
4. Is the role of APTs significant? How does this differ to that of the pathologists?
5. What, if any, weight is given to competing interests (such of those of the family and religious communities) in the body? How are any conflicts resolved?
6. What, if any, contact do APTs have with the bereaved and legal officials?

In addition to carrying out interviews, my funding extends to holding a workshop during which the findings and implications of this research will be discussed. You will be invited to attend this workshop, although you are under no obligation to do so.

Can I withdraw from the research?

Yes. You can withdraw fully or partially from the project at any time up to one month after the interview. You do not have to give reasons for this decision. If you choose to do this relevant material resulting from your participation will be destroyed immediately.

How will the data be used?

This is an exploratory project intended to respond to existing critiques of the death investigation process and to inform future research design. In terms of immediate outputs, some of the interview material is likely to appear in one or more academic journal articles. If you would like to be kept in touch regarding these, you can indicate this on your consent form. In addition, I may produce short blogs to appear on a personal academic website and an institutional briefing report. All participants can opt to receive a summary sheet at the end of the project.

Will I be identified?

If you consent, I will record the interview, but you will not be identifiable in anything I write about the research. All participants will be anonymised with a code. This will identify only whether the person is a pathologist or APT. All transcripts will be encrypted and kept on a secure, password protected computer. The data will only be accessible by the researcher and will not be shared on any wider repository. Once transcribed, voice recordings will be permanently deleted. If, at any point in the publication process, I am concerned that a quote may identify a participant, additional consent for the use of that material will be sought. All the contact information that I collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the research data.

If you choose to attend the later workshop, it is possible that you may be identified by other participants as someone who took part in the research. It should however be noted that most people in attendance will not have taken part in the interview stage of this research.

My contact details

If you agree to this, please let me know your preferred date/time and location for an interview by email: i.jones2@leeds.ac.uk I can also be reached via phone on 07813 919441.

I would be most grateful for your assistance in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Imogen Jones
Associate Professor in Law