

EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF LEGAL MEDICINE
ECLM



Syllabus of Postgraduate Specialisation in Legal Medicine

- Amendments of May 29th, 1999 - Zurich

After direct and adequately supervised participation at a specialised department of Legal Medicine, with an established post-graduate teaching commitment, the specialist in Legal Medicine should produce documented evidence of the acquisition of a broad knowledge, experience and expertise in the medico-legal matters. Once proficiency has been achieved it would be incumbent on the specialist to participate in continuing professional education.

The items which are listed hereunder form the basis of the general professional formation which can be followed by a specialisation in one or several, but not necessarily all subfields.

1. Personal attendance at scenes of crime and of suspicious deaths to assist and take an active part in the teamwork required for on-site investigations, for the preservation and documentation of the scene and for reconstruction of the incident. Familiarity with external and internal postmortem changes including putrefaction, interference by animal predators and skeletalisation.
2. Knowledge of medico-legal criminalistics particularly the detection, collection and preservation of all trace evidential material, the sampling of stains and of body fluids, and the performance of immediate "presumptive" *in situ* tests.
3. Proficiency in the methods by which a detailed external examination of the deceased should be carried out, to include methods of assessing the "postmortem interval".
4. Experience in ordinary forensic autopsy techniques, including specialised *post-mortem* forensic investigative procedures, a sound knowledge of forensic pathology and a basic knowledge of diagnostic clinical pathology: these are

required for the elucidation of causes and manners of death in cases ranging over all age groups, including children, and over a wide spectrum of manners of natural and non-natural death, to include homicide, suicides and fatal accidents.

5. Detailed microscopic examination of pathological material from a vast spectrum of natural and non-natural conditions, including specialised histological techniques, and immunohistochemical and molecular biological methods, such as the differentiation of intravital infliction of injury.
6. Medical examination and detailed description and assessment of injuries and their sequelae on both living and deceased persons throughout the age spectrum, including cases of abuse (such as sexual abuse, posttraumatic stress disorder, etc.) that would enable a full evaluation of such aspects of direct legal interest as their method of infliction, possible causation, consequences and complications.
7. Knowledge of mechanisms of intoxication, and the clinical and laboratory evaluation of the presence and degree of intoxication in the living and the dead.
8. Familiarity with sampling requirements, with investigative laboratory techniques to include their discriminatory value, and their margins of error, and with the interpretation of scientific analytical reports in the context of all other relevant findings in the case.
9. Knowledge of principles of forensic genetics including disputed paternity and investigation of biological stains.
10. Proficiency in identification procedures and methods to include elements of forensic anthropology and odontology, and in the procedures to be followed after a major incident.
11. Familiarity with medico-legal aspects of fitness in certain skills, duties and legal procedures which are subject to detailed legal provisions including the medico-legal assessment and examination of persons in detention (such as fitness for custody, for interview, to plead, to drive, etc.).
12. Familiarity with the forensic aspects of physical and mental health.
13. Detailed knowledge of the legal status of the medical expert, of the laws of evidence and of the legal consequences of medical actions.

14. Compilation of authoritative medico-legal reports to the relevant authorities, describing in detail the findings and results of any examinations carried out and including a full and pertinent commentary which provides balanced scientific opinion and conclusions.

What characterises the specialist in Legal Medicine is the overall ability to integrate all the findings pertaining to a particular incident, and therefrom to assist with the reconstruction of a chain of events.

