Forensic Pathology

Objective
The overall objective of the elective in forensic pathology is to introduce medical students to a subspecialty in anatomical pathology, the practice of which can be substantially different from everyday clinical (surgical) pathology, and give a better appreciation of the broad scope of pathology disciplines. During the elective the student will be introduced to autopsy and gross pathology, as well as further their anatomy knowledge. The student will become familiar with the concepts of cause, manner and mechanisms of death. Students will learn autopsy techniques, and gain an appreciation of organ systems both in natural and diseased states. The different types of injuries that can occur will be identified during the rotation, and these will be interpreted within the context of case histories. The use of toxicology in postmortem investigations will be introduced, as well as the interpretation of toxicology results. In spending time within the Department of Pathology, we hope to allow elective students to develop, or to further, their interest in pathology as a medical specialty.

Description
The elective in Forensic Pathology is designed to enable medical students to experience forensic pathology, a subspecialty field within anatomical pathology. The elective will focus on autopsy pathology and gross pathology and the interaction with the medicolegal system. Medical students will review case histories, formulate a differential diagnosis on potential causes of death and create a plan on how to investigate those potential causes through a postmortem examination (including an autopsy, as well as ancillary studies as needed). They will participate in the autopsy (as the case permits) and review the results of the case (including relevant histologic findings from specimens taken during the autopsy) with the attending forensic pathologist. As the forensic pathology service at Vancouver General Hospital covers both the forensic and hospital autopsy services, students will be exposed to a broad scope of cases. Supervision of medical students will be done by staff forensic pathologists, as well as residents on their forensic pathology rotation.