



**Academic Forensic Pathology:  
The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners**

**JOURNAL INFORMATION | EDITORIAL POLICIES | INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** (ISSN 1925-3621) is published by Academic Forensic Pathology International. This triple-blinded, peer-reviewed journal is published electronically four times each year.

The Journal follows the Recommendations for Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (available at <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/>), the principles of the World Association of Medical Editors (<http://wame.org>), and the Committee on Publication Ethics (<http://publicationethics.org>).

# **JOURNAL INFORMATION**

## **SCOPE**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** is committed to publishing high quality, timely, and relevant scholarly manuscripts of importance to the practice of forensic pathology. We define forensic pathology as the medical subspecialty wherein practitioners observe, document, and interpret the medicolegal significance of injuries and diseases in both living and deceased humans. Given that, we will review manuscripts on any aspect of:

- Death investigation
- Forensic medicine including sexual assault/rape
- Autopsy pathology
- Forensic histopathology
- Toxicology
- Forensic imaging/radiology
- Forensic anthropology
- Forensic neuropathology
- Cardiovascular pathology
- Pulmonary pathology
- Other subspecialty organ/tissue pathology of medicolegal relevance
- Medical jurisprudence
- Forensic photography
- Forensic sciences include DNA biology, chemistry, entomology and botany
- Any other area with obvious relevance to the practice of forensic pathology

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The reputation of our (and any) medical specialty is in large part a function of the scholarly literature it produces. The vision of the Editor-In-Chief and the Publisher is for a forensic pathology journal that is worthy of representing our field. High quality, timely, and relevant are the descriptors we promote. As the quality of our literature directly reflects the reputation of our field, we can only afford to publish high quality manuscripts that demonstrate that we forensic pathologists understand the basic principles of science, and that we understand and utilize the basic principles of evidence-based medicine. To accomplish this, we must take an innovative and visionary approach to publishing. Our profession is very small, and for decades has been built around countless fascinating stories. This leads to an (over) abundance of single case reports and small case series. Despite the fact that data, tissue, and new (scholarly) ideas are plentiful, the lack of a single full-time researcher in the field combined with severe limitations of funding (within individual offices, from grant-conferring agencies, and within the field on the whole), the generalized understaffed and overworked nature of most offices, complicated ethical considerations around human tissue retention and research, and other issues all contribute toward making it a challenge to have successful academic ventures.

We strive to produce an excellent periodical that stands toe-to-toe with the top clinical journals of other medical specialties. To strive for less does not make sense, and further promotes the misconception that forensic pathologists are not “real” doctors, do not really practice medicine, and are somehow less valuable to our communities than our clinical colleagues.

Success starts with recognition that our field is different – forensic pathology is populated with practitioners who are predominantly paid to function as “service pathologists.” As such, any forensic pathology journal model reliant on the output of forensic pathology researchers, or “traditional academics” will fail. Recognizing this, our Journal takes a practical approach to scholarly publishing. Each issue highlights a specific, predetermined topic, and approximately half of each issue ultimately consists of

invited reviews that successfully navigate stringent peer review. By reducing our reliance on unsolicited manuscripts, we can more stringently scrutinize original article submissions and thus commit to publishing only “the best of the best” science in our profession. We believe that by setting a very high standard for acceptance into publication, our Journal will promote a higher quality of research in the field as a whole, and will thereby improve our visibility and reputation amongst our clinical colleagues.

## **WHY PUBLISH IN THE *AFP* JOURNAL?**

Manuscripts accepted for publication in ***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** (the “*AFP* Journal”) receive global attention in the English-speaking forensic pathology world. As the result of our relationship with our sponsoring society (NAME – the National Association of Medical Examiners), every NAME member receives access to the Journal. Furthermore, our Journal has become a go-to resource for many attorneys, law enforcement officers, public health officials, and medical professionals, who require specialized information on high-level medicolegal topics. The *AFP* Journal has received significant support and accolades from both NAME and a wide variety of stakeholder agencies.

Authors who successfully publish their manuscripts in our Journal have demonstrated a commitment to the highest levels of scientific publishing. Acceptance of a manuscript denotes the completion of a stringent “testing” of their work through aggressive triple-blinded peer review, in the face of industry standard policies and guidelines that guide moral, ethical, and professional aspects of medical journal writing, reviewing, and editing.

## EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT

The Editorial Management team consists of both appointed and “staff” members:

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- Editor in Chief
- Associate EIC
- Editorial Board

### Journal Oversight Committee (appointed)

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- Ethics Director
- Content & Quality Director
- Compliance Director
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### Editorial Staff

- Editorial Director
- Medical Illustrator

## JOURNAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The Journal Oversight Committee is a committee of appointed members who are selected annually from peer nominations. To be considered for appointment to the committee, members must be fellowship trained and examination board certified forensic pathologists, or be qualified in a related paramedical or scientific specialty. The committee is composed of:

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Chief Medical Examiner

Travis County Medical Examiner's Office

Austin, TX, USA

[pinckard@academicfp.com](mailto:pinckard@academicfp.com)

### **ASSOCIATE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**Nicholas I. Batalis MD**

Associate Professor

Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Medical University of South Carolina

Charleston, SC, USA

[batalis@academicfp.com](mailto:batalis@academicfp.com)

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Arapahoe County Coroner's Office

Centennial, CO, USA

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Forensic Pathologist

Gold Coast University Hospital

Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services

Southport, Queensland, Australia

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Assistant Chief Medical Examiner

Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office

Minneapolis, MN, USA

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Ontario Forensic Pathology Service

Ottawa, ON, Canada

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George Washington University  
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In compliance with ICMJE Guidelines, The Editor-In-Chief (EIC) is appointed by the Publisher. The EIC must be a fellowship-trained and examination board certified forensic pathologist with a proven track record in scholarly pursuits including scientific publishing. Term appointments to the EIC position are made in consultation with the Executive Committee of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), and the Journal Oversight Committee. One or more Associate EIC's are recommended by the EIC to the Publisher based on a proven track record of providing high quality peer reviews for the AFP Journal. The Associate EIC may be a member of the Editorial Board.

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The day-to-day operations of the Journal are coordinated by numerous individuals including:

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Emma O. Lew MD

[publisher@academicfp.com](mailto:publisher@academicfp.com)

### **Founder and Executive Director**

Evan W. Matshes MD FRCPC

[matshes@academicfp.com](mailto:matshes@academicfp.com)

### **Director of Operations**

Don Downey BA PMT

[don@academicfp.com](mailto:don@academicfp.com)

### **Editorial Director**

Lori Selanders BSc MSc

[selanders@academicfp.com](mailto:selanders@academicfp.com)

### **Research Associate**

Casey Bitting MD

[bitting@academicfp.com](mailto:bitting@academicfp.com)

### **Medical Illustrator-In-Residence**

Diana Kryski

[diana@academicfp.com](mailto:diana@academicfp.com)

## **THE PUBLISHER**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** is published by Academic Forensic Pathology International (AFPi). AFPi is a small medical education and publishing house originally founded by three forensic pathologists: Evan Matshes MD FRCPC, David Dolinak MD, and Emma Lew MD as Academic Forensic Pathology Incorporated. AFPi produces the *AFP Journal*, offers educational courses and sessions for private citizens and academic/governmental units, and publishes paper print publications.

The *AFP Journal* operates from a revenue stream generated by:

- NAME membership dues (paid directly [annually] by our sponsoring society)
- Institutional subscription sales
- Non-NAME member individual subscriber dues
- Reprint fees
- Advertising fees from third party companies

## **JOURNAL ACCESS**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** is published four (4) times per year in electronic format – in both PDF and XML-tagged full text versions.

The Journal is accessed online at [www.afpjournal.com](http://www.afpjournal.com).

### ***Members of the National Association of Medical Examiners***

A subscription to the *AFP Journal* is included with all NAME member dues. As such, all current NAME members automatically have Journal access. If you have forgotten or lost your log-on information, please email [admin@academicfp.com](mailto:admin@academicfp.com), or call 1-888-909-7856 (toll free) or 1-858-299-5151 for assistance.

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You can purchase either (a) an annual Journal subscription or (b) reprints of individual articles by visiting the AFPi store at <https://store.academicfp.com>.

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Any library, academic unit, or government body may purchase an institutional subscription by visiting the AFPi store at <https://store.academicfp.com>. We recommend telephone consultation **prior** to your purchase. Please call 1-888-909-7856 (toll free) or 1-858-299-5151 for assistance.

**PUBLICATION SCHEDULE**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** is published four (4) times per year:

- March 1
- June 1
- September 1
- December 1

A special “Supplemental” issue containing the abstracts submitted and accepted for platform or poster presentation at the NAME Annual Meeting is published each November.

## ARCHIVING

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** is committed to maintaining a permanent digital archive of all manuscripts accepted for publication. To that end, we are proud to house copies of all published manuscripts with **CLOCKSS** (<http://www.clockss.org>).

According to CLOCKSS:

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Academic Forensic Pathology International is actively pursuing indexing in a variety of high profile services including PubMed Central (which will also act as a permanent digital archive of our content [<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>]).

## PEER REVIEW PROCESS

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** utilizes a triple-blinded peer review process, meaning that:

1. The authors are blind to the identities of the reviewers;
2. The reviewers are blind to the identities of the authors; and
3. The Editor-In-Chief and Associate Editor-In-Chief are blind to the identities of the authors.

When a manuscript is submitted, Journal staff removes all identifying information such as author names and institutional affiliations and redact identifying information within the text of the submitted manuscript before the manuscript is sent to the Editor-In-Chief for review and triage.

### **Our editorial process involves three core components:**

#### *First Decision:*

The submitted manuscript is evaluated for compliance with Journal Editorial Policies and all applicable Instructions for Authors. If the manuscript is found to be compliant with these requirements, an anonymized version of the manuscript is submitted to the Editor-In-Chief for triage review (see Second Decision).

#### *Second Decision:*

Having been found compliant with Journal Editorial Policies and applicable Instructions for Authors, the Editor-In-Chief assesses the suitability of the manuscript for possible publication in the Journal. The primary criterion assessed at the point of the Second Decision is compatibility with the Scope and Philosophy of the Journal. If the Editor-In-Chief concludes that the manuscript is within the Scope and Philosophy of the Journal, the Associate Editor-In-Chief is asked to identify two or more reviewers (selected from

the Editorial Board, external expert reviewers, or both) to undertake a formal review of the manuscript under consideration.

*Third Decision:*

Having been found to be within the Scope and Philosophy of the Journal, assigned peer reviewers are asked to perform a formal (both template-driven and free-form) assessment of the scientific merit and quality of the manuscript. In general, the peer reviewers are asked to review:

- Overall scientific quality (e.g., clarity of the hypothesis, if relevant; novelty of the work; practicality of the work; etc.)
- The abstract
- Methods
- Results/Data
- Conclusions
- Ethics
- Other as necessary and relevant

The peer reviewers then offer an editorial decision (see Editorial Decisions under Editorial Policies). The Associate Editor-In-Chief then also offers a penultimate decision, which is reviewed by the Editor-In-Chief who concludes with a “third” or “final” decision.

## **Editorial Timeline**

***First Decision:***

Authors will be advised within three (3) business days of submission if their manuscripts have been accepted for formal editorial review.

***Second Decision:***

If the manuscript has not been triaged for peer review, an explanation will be provided.

### ***Third Decision:***

The results of peer reviews are conveyed to the Associate Editor-In-Chief and then the Editor-In-Chief who considers the opinions, speaking directly with the reviewers if necessary. A final decision on acceptance of the manuscript is made within 30 to 45 days, depending on the results of the review. Specifically:

1. Uniform agreement by the reviewers, the Associate Editor-In-Chief, and the Editor-In-Chief to accept, with or without revision, results in publication. This decision will be reported to the author(s) within 30 days.
2. Uniform agreement by reviewers, Associate Editor-In-Chief, and the Editor-In-Chief to reject the manuscript results in immediate rejection. This decision will be reported to the author(s) within 30 days.
3. Non-uniform agreement regarding manuscript acceptance will mandate involvement of *at least* one additional reviewer, who might be either a member of the Editorial Board, or a guest reviewer. After the Editor-In-Chief receives the results from the additional reviewer(s), the decision about acceptance/rejection rests with the Editor-In-Chief and will be based upon consideration of all available reviews and his/her own review. This decision will be reported to the author(s) within 45 days.

In accordance with the accepted standards of editorial practice, the Editor-In-Chief is ultimately responsible for the editorial content of the Journal.

Prior to final manuscript acceptance, the Editor-In-Chief will review a version of the manuscript that includes all identifying data, as well as the results of online plagiarism/duplication investigations.

When a manuscript is accepted with revisions, the author(s) will have 30 calendar days to comply with the Editor-In-Chief's editorial requirements or to withdraw their

manuscript. Revised manuscripts received after 30 calendar days will be treated as new submissions.

## **AUTHOR FEES**

There are no author fees for submission of a manuscript for peer review.

There are no author fees for pre-publication production activities such as typesetting and design.

There are no author fees for publication of an accepted manuscript.

Put another way, authors never pay any fees to have their accepted manuscripts published in ***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners***.

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7946 Ivanhoe Avenue, Suite 107  
La Jolla, CA  
92037

**Toll-free (USA/Canada):** 1-888-909-7856, Extension 101

**International:** 1-858-299-5151

### **Email:**

**General:** [publisher@academicfp.com](mailto:publisher@academicfp.com)

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At the time a new manuscript is submitted, authors whose works meet specific criteria can request a Fast-Track Review; in these circumstances, the time between manuscript submission and final decision will be seven calendar days. The Editor-In-Chief may

independently select the Fast-Track Review option if his/her initial review of the submitted manuscript suggests the contents of the manuscript are of sufficient magnitude to warrant rapid review and (if accepted for publication) dissemination to the profession and its stakeholders.

Criteria for Fast-Track Review are:

- The results of the research are of significant magnitude as to have an immediate impact on the practice of forensic pathology, or
- A delay in publication could result in a negative impact to the forensic pathology and criminal justice communities, or to members of the general public.

Authors should request a Fast-Track Review in writing in their cover letter when their manuscript is uploaded via ScholarOne (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/afpj>).

# **EDITORIAL POLICIES**

## **OVERVIEW**

Submission of a manuscript to *Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners* implies:

1. That the manuscript conforms to all of the Journal's policies and requirements;  
and
2. That all of the manuscript authors have read, agreed to, and understand the Journal's policies.

## **PUBLISHING ETHICS POLICY**

The Editorial Management team and the Publisher are committed to the best practices of conduct in scientific writing, research and publishing. As such, the Journal follows the Recommendations for Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (available at <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/>), the principles of the World Association of Medical Editors (<http://wame.org>), and the Committee on Publication Ethics (<http://publicationethics.org>).

The Editor-In-Chief is committed to reporting complex cases of misconduct to COPE, and to communicating the outcome of case referrals to the involved parties. The Editor-In-Chief is committed to acting in a fair and transparent fashion.

Guidance and directives on specific ethical issues can be found in other sections of the Journal Information document, including:

- Authorship

- Article Correction and Retraction Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Prior/Duplicate Publication
- Allegations of Unethical Behavior or Misconduct
- Funding
- Appeals and Complaints
- Transparency

All researchers and authors should act – from project conception through final manuscript submission – in a fashion that is in alignment with the highest ethical standards in medical publishing.

The Editorial Management and all ad hoc reviewers are required to comment on specific ethical questions for each submitted manuscript, and to bring overarching ethical concerns to the Editor-In-Chief or Publisher.

Forensic pathology is a very unique field within medicine as death investigations and autopsies are performed as a matter of statutory authority, rather than medical necessity or for strictly research purposes. Furthermore, the vast majority of authors and researchers in our field are not members of academic centers with *bona fide* institutional review boards. As such, authors and researchers are strongly encouraged to consider broad ethical principles that apply to their work, the legal framework within which they operate, and any jurisdictional policies and procedures in place within their home institution that may impact or guide ability to write and publish about ideas, concepts, data, or cases derived from their legal medicine practice.

To that end, in general, when a forensic pathologist / medical examiner authors a paper that follows the principles of medical ethics and the law, and the Editorial Policies of this Journal have been followed (and the author has indicated this in writing), the following policy statement will be published in the accepted manuscript:

\_\_\_\_\_ *As per Journal Policies, ethical approval was not required for this manuscript.*

When ethical approval was required and sought from an oversight body, one of the following statements must be selected:

*Ethical approval for this study was obtained from [NAME OF ETHICS COMMITTEE OR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (APPROVAL NUMBER/ID)].*

*Or*

*Ethical approval for this study was waived by [NAME OF ETHICS COMMITTEE OR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD] because [REASON FOR WAIVER].*

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Manuscripts submitted to ***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** are the private work product of the authors. Thus, it is the reviewer's responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of any manuscripts that he or she reviews. It is a violation of the terms of practice for a reviewer to contact the author(s) of a manuscript they are reviewing or have reviewed, or communicate with any other individual regarding the content of the submitted manuscript, their review of that manuscript, or any related communications between themselves and the Editor-In-Chief/Associate Editor-In-Chief, or the Publisher.

## **EDITORIAL DECISIONS**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** recognizes four (4) editorial decisions: accept, accept pending revisions, reconsider after major revisions, and reject. Descriptions of those decisions

are quoted directly from Provenzale JM, Stanley RJ. A systematic guide to reviewing a manuscript. *Am J Roentgenol.* 2005 Oct; 185(4):848-54.

### ***Accept***

The global rating of Accept is clear-cut and unambiguous; this rating implies that the reviewer does not see any need for revision of the manuscript and that it is suitable for publication “as is.” In fact, because most reviewers (with good reason) suggest changes to any manuscript, the Accept rating is granted to few manuscripts on initial review. Given that it is a rare manuscript that cannot be improved in some way, sometimes the Accept rating is an indication that the reviewer has not looked at the manuscript with an eye toward improvement. When revisions are suggested, the decision category always should be Accept Pending Revisions rather than Accept.

### ***Accept Pending Revisions***

The Accept Pending Revisions rating indicates that the reviewer finds some ways in which the manuscript should be changed before final acceptance. The suggested changes may include items such as a request for clarification of the methods. However, it is implied in this rating that the authors can reasonably make these changes and that doing so will more or less result in publication of the revised version of the original manuscript.

### ***Reconsider After Major Revisions***

A rating of Reconsider After Major Revisions indicates that the reviewer believes that considerable changes are needed but that a reasonable possibility exists for the manuscript to proceed to publication. Examples of indications for providing this rating include a belief that, first, the reported data need to be analyzed in a different manner; second, additional data are needed; third, the authors have failed to appropriately take certain study factors into account; or fourth, the authors have not appropriately discussed their results against the background of previous studies. Most manuscripts that receive a Reconsider After Major Revisions recommendation are ultimately published.

## ***Reject***

The Reject rating is provided when the reviewer is of the opinion that no amount of revision will make the manuscript suitable for the journal to which it was submitted. It is worth emphasizing that, in some cases, the rating is based not on the opinion that the manuscript is poorly written or an inadequate study. Instead, sometimes a reviewer recommends rejection on the belief that the manuscript was submitted to the inappropriate journal.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** takes authorship very seriously. Each and every individual listed as an author on a manuscript submitted to our Journal must qualify for authorship. It is not acceptable to include individuals as authors who do not have meaningful contributions to the work. This means, for example, that the Chief Medical Examiner should not be a *de facto* author on any paper originating in his/her office simply because that person is the Chief and allowed the work to take place, using case material from the office.

As a member of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), our Journal conforms to the definition authorship published in the ICMJE document "*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals*". The following requirements for authorship are reproduced directly from that document (<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>):

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that

questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

To qualify for authorship, an individual must meet ALL four of the above conditions. Furthermore:

- Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group alone does not constitute authorship.
- All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed.
- Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

At the time of manuscript submission, the corresponding author must certify that all listed authors satisfy each of these criteria. All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgements section. Examples of those who might be acknowledged include a person who provided purely technical help, writing assistance, or a department Chairperson [or Chief Medical Examiner] who provided only general support.

Upon acceptance of a manuscript, the authors will be asked to verify the roles that each author played, and these will be published on the first page of the manuscript.

## **ARTICLE CORRECTION AND RETRACTION POLICY**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the principles outlined by the document entitled “*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals*” as published by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE; <http://www.icmje.org>).

The *AFP* Journal also adheres to The National Library of Medicine (NLM) definitions for standard literature correction terminology. These definitions can be found in the NLM Fact Sheet at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/errata.html> as well as in the Council of Science Editors White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications (<http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3647>).

The *AFP* Journal also adheres to the Retraction Guidelines published by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which can be accessed at <http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>.

The definitions below are taken from these cited sources.

### ***Errata***

Errata are published changes or emendations to an earlier article, also referred to as corrections or corrigenda, which originate either in the publication process or from errors of scientific logic or methodology. Errata identify an important error made by the journal. They involve a correction to a small, isolated portion of an otherwise reliable article; errata are generally not published for simple, obvious typographical errors, but corrections are published when an apparently simple error is significant or if the publication record is seriously affected, for example with regard to the scientific accuracy of published information, or the reputation of the authors, or the reputation of the journal. Corrigendum make note of an important error made by the author(s) that affects the publication record or the scientific integrity of the paper, or the reputation of the authors or the journal. All authors must sign corrigenda submitted for publication. In cases where coauthors disagree, the editors will take advice from independent peer-reviewers and impose the appropriate amendment, noting the dissenting author(s) in the text of the published version.

When such an amendment is published, the corrections will appear on a numbered page, be listed in the Table of Contents, include the complete original citation and be linked bi-directionally to and from the article being corrected. A PDF version of the

correction is added to the original article PDF so that the original article PDF will remain the same as the printed page and readers downloading the PDF will receive the original article plus amendment.

### ***Retractions***

Retractions identify an article that was previously published and is now retracted or withdrawn through a formal issuance from the author, editor, publisher, or other authorized agent such as the academic or institutional sponsor. Articles can be retracted because of pervasive error, unsubstantiated or irreproducible data, scientific misconduct, or duplicate publication.

When a retraction is published it will appear on a numbered page in a prominent section of the online and print edition of the journal, be listed in the Table of Contents page, and include in its heading the title of the original article. Ideally, the first author of the retraction should be the same as that of the article, however, depending on the circumstances, the editor may accept retractions by other responsible persons. The retraction should not simply be a letter to the editor; rather, the text of the retraction should explain why the article is being retracted and include a complete citation reference to that article.

### ***Partial Retractions***

A “retraction in part” or a “partial retraction” is just that — only a portion of the article is being retracted. It is more significant than an erratum. Partial retractions are usually the result of an incorrect section or a particular portion of an article that is incorrect, leaving the majority of the information and the article’s stated conclusions uncompromised by the removal of that portion of the content.

Partial retractions will be published similar to a full retraction and will explicitly state that a single statement or specified text, graph, figure, or data is being retracted so that it is abundantly clear and unambiguous that only a portion of the article is being retracted, rather than the full article.

### ***Corrected and Republished Articles***

If the journal decides to correct or amplify a previously published article by republishing the article in its entirety, often to rectify an editorial or printing error in the original article, it will be referred to as a Corrected and Republished Article. A link will be created between the original PDF article and the corrected and republished PDF article.

### ***Duplicate Publication***

If an article is found to substantially duplicate another article without acknowledgement, a notice of duplicate publication will be published within the journal upon discovery.

## **DECEDENT/PATIENT ANONYMITY**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** takes decedent and patient privacy very seriously. As such, the *AFP* Journal will only publish decedent/patient information and images that have been sufficiently anonymized. The Journal defines “sufficient anonymization” as:

- Anonymization of data or images such that neither the subject or anyone else could identify the subject(s) presented in the manuscript.

In some unusual circumstances, sufficient anonymization may result in the loss of information or evidence. In this event, the authors will be asked to confidentially submit detailed information to satisfy the claims made by the authors. A statement to this effect would be included in the publication of the article.

All photographs must be anonymized prior to submission for consideration of publication. This includes removing identifiable personal features (e.g., some facial features, tattoos, case numbers, etc.). Some jurisdictions have strict regulations on the reproduction of autopsy photographs, and other photographs produced during the course of a State-mandated death investigation. Authors are required to ensure compliance with any legal

or regulatory requirements that pertain to the use and reproduction of the photographs of deceased individuals.

Patient and decedent health/death investigation information may be protected under law in your jurisdiction. Authors are required to ensure compliance with local, regional, State, and Federal legal and regulatory requirements.

Reproduction of the protected health information of living patients can be very complicated. Authors must be aware of all local institutional and legal implications of any scientific manuscripts they produce that may identify living patients. In particular, authors must be cognizant of the special implications of publishing information about living (a) children, (b) patients who lack capacity, and (c) persons in custody of a prison or any form of law enforcement.

Authors should see also our Statement of Informed Consent (below).

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the principles outlined by the “*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*” as defined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Additional information about conflict of interest can be obtained from the ICMJE website (<http://icmje.org>).

Conflict of interest is a complex issue. As such, it is not possible to list all of the possible types of conflict that may occur during the creation of a scholarly article. Authors are asked to carefully review their own situation, determine whether or not perceived or actual conflicts of interest have occurred, and to communicate such conflicts to the Publisher and the Editor-In-Chief. Conflict disclosure is to occur during initial submission of the manuscript through ScholarOne Manuscripts

(<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/afpj>), but authors should feel free to declare potential or actual conflicts at any other time by contacting the Publisher ([publisher@academicfp.com](mailto:publisher@academicfp.com)).

Examples of potential and actual conflict of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Receiving payment for writing or reviewing the manuscript;
- Receiving payment for committee work related to the production of the manuscript;
- Receiving payment for expert testimony specifically related to the manuscript; and
- Receiving payment, royalties, stock options, etc., in return for featuring a commercial product in a manuscript.

The Editor-In-Chief, Associate Editor-In-Chief, Editorial Board Members, Guest Editors, *ad hoc* reviewers and Publishing staff are required to disclose relationships that may be real or perceived conflicts of interest, and to excuse themselves when necessary from the editorial process.

The following process serves to outline the mechanism by which apparent competing or conflicting interests of all editorial staff and members of the editorial board are handled:

1. Apparent conflicts involving ad hoc reviewers, any member of the Editorial Board, the Associate Editor-In-Chief, the editorial management, or the Publisher are reported to the Editor-In-Chief who is responsible for resolving the conflict(s).
2. Apparent conflicts involving the Editor-In-Chief are reported to the Publisher, who will report the conflict to the Chair of the Journal Oversight Committee for resolution.

All manuscript reviewers are required to disclose any actual or potential competing interests before agreeing to review a submitted manuscript.

When a manuscript is published and there are no known or declared conflicts of interest, the following policy statement will be printed on the published manuscript:

*The authors, reviewers, editors, and publication staff do not report any relevant conflicts of interest.*

Any known or potential conflicts will be identified and printed in the article

## **ADVERTISING POLICY**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** accepts fee-for-service advertising online on the Journal website, and within the non-scholarly content of the Journal PDF.

Journal guidelines for inclusion of paid advertising:

1. Only advertisements for products and services logically related to forensic pathology or more broadly to death investigation, will be considered for inclusion in the Journal.
2. The decision on acceptance of an advertisement for publication in the Journal rests fully and finally with the Editor-In-Chief.
3. The Editor-In-Chief has the full authority and requirement to enforce this policy. The Editor-In-Chief will also consider all criticisms of advertisements included for publication.
4. Advertisements will never be juxtaposed within scholarly content.
5. Advertisements adjacent to scholarly content will not be directly related to the neighboring manuscript. For example, a paper testing the efficacy of testing for a drug with Test X, will not be printed next to an advertisement for a company that sells Test X.
6. Online “banner advertisements” will be randomly displayed, and not based on reader behavior.

7. The Journal never accepts advertisements for products that have been proven to be harmful to health.
8. Advertisements will always be clearly visible as such; no advertisement will ever be printed in a format that mimics the style or design of our scholarly content.
9. Beyond the guidelines listed here, neither the interests of the Publisher of the sponsoring society, will control advertising.
10. Each whole issue of the Journal shall contain the following statement:

Publication of an advertisement or other product mention in *Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners* is not an endorsement of either the product or the manufacturer's claims and should not be construed as such. The website of *Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners* may contain links to external websites. This is not an endorsement nor does Academic Forensic Pathology International take responsibility or liability for any content, advertising, products, or other materials on any linked websites, and does not take responsibility for the sites' availability.

## STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the principles outlined by the “*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*” as defined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).

Additional considerations about Informed Consent can be obtained from the ICMJE website ([www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org)). Authors should see also our policy on Decedent/Patient Anonymity (above).

Patients have a right to privacy that should not be violated without informed consent. Identifying information, including names, initials, hospital numbers, and autopsy

numbers should not be published in written descriptions, photographs, or pedigrees unless the information is essential for scientific purposes and the living patient (or parent or guardian), or the decedent's legal next of kin provides written informed consent for publication. Informed consent for this purpose requires that an identifiable patient (or the next of kin of the decedent) be shown the manuscript to be published. Authors should disclose to these patients/next of kin whether any potential identifiable material might be available via the Internet as well as in print after publication. Nonessential identifying details should be omitted. Informed consent should be obtained if there is any doubt that anonymity can be maintained. For example, masking the eye region in photographs of patients may be insufficient protection of anonymity.

Photographs depicting living or deceased individuals may be edited by Journal staff and/or the editor as needed to further protect the identity of subjects; the author(s) will be notified of such changes and allowed to view and approve the updated photographs prior to publication. If identifying characteristics are altered to protect anonymity, such as in genetic pedigrees, authors should provide assurance, and the editor will note, that such alterations do not distort scientific meaning.

Compliance with this policy will be printed in the article as a **Statement of Informed Consent**. In those cases where informed consent was not required because of the nature of the data or material presented, the following policy statement will be printed on the published manuscript:

*No identifiable personal data were presented in this manuscript.*

When informed consent has been obtained, it will be indicated in the published article. Consent must be written and archived with the author and be made available upon request by the Journal. The Journal will advise authors **prior to publication** if written informed consent is required.

## STATEMENT OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the principles outlined by the “*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*” as defined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Much of this policy has been taken directly from that document. Additional considerations about human and animal rights can be obtained from the ICMJE website ([www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org)).

When reporting experiments on human subjects, authors should indicate whether the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2013. If doubt exists whether the research was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration, the authors must explain the rationale for their approach and demonstrate that the institutional review body explicitly approved the doubtful aspects of the study. When reporting experiments on animals, authors should indicate whether the institutional and national guides for the care and use of laboratory animals was followed.

The vast majority of manuscripts submitted to this Journal will not involve research on living human subjects or animals. In those cases, the following policy statement will be printed on the published manuscript:

*This article does not contain any studies conducted with animals or on living human subjects.*

## PRIOR / DUPLICATE PUBLICATION

It is actually possible to plagiarize oneself. Once a journal publishes a manuscript, the copyright assignment is generally transferred from the authors to the publisher (see Copyright in Journal Information above). With rare exception, it is not permissible to publish the same work in more than one journal, even if it would be beneficial to have the work available to two vastly different readerships. There are certain exceptions, for example, republishing seminal papers or guideline papers, providing the appropriate permissions from the original publisher is obtained. Publishing similar papers in two different journals, even if the two manuscripts are not verbatim copies, using the same data or research material, is also unethical, may constitute plagiarism, and would likely violate copyright law.

The Publisher uses numerous online resources to detecting fabrication, falsification and plagiarism.

The Publisher routinely makes directed inquiries to ensure authors and co-authors do not have related or overlapping publications within our Journal, and in other scholarly journals and books.

## **ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR OR MISCONDUCT**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the guidelines outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (<http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>). If, during the editorial process the Editor-In-Chief (EIC) believes that an author has acted inappropriately (including acts of dishonesty such as plagiarism and double submission), or receives an allegation of such misconduct, the Editor-In-Chief will communicate the allegations to the author. Then, also in accordance with the recommendations of the World Association of Medical Editors (<http://www.wame.org/>), the Editor-In-Chief will communicate the allegations to the appropriate author institution for further investigation. If the allegations arise prior to manuscript publication, publication will be suspended until the matter is resolved. If the allegations are proven true after publication, *“the editor*

*should publish that fact, which may include a letter from one or more of the authors and an institutional official retracting the article. Editors should not retract articles on their own initiative.”*

Based on the nature and magnitude of the offense, sanctions may include lifetime ban from authorship in the Journal.

## **FUNDING**

Readers must be informed about the source of funding for all manuscripts (research and non-research articles) published in our Journal. When a manuscript has been produced with financial support, authors must disclose what role the funders had in the publication (e.g. writing, analysis or control over the publication).

If an author submits a manuscript for which they have received financial support or any form of inducements, this must be disclosed in writing to the Journal at the time the manuscript is initially submitted.

Our Journal is published four (4) times per year around themed issues. Approximately half of the content of each issue is solicited from experts in related fields. No funding is provided by the Publisher or national society, to any project or author, solicited or otherwise.

All relevant financial declarations are disclosed in writing in the accepted manuscript under the section **Financial Disclosure**. In those cases when there are no relevant financial declarations, the following policy statement will be printed on the published manuscript:

*The author(s) have indicated that they do not have financial relationships to disclose that are relevant to this manuscript.*

## PRESENTATIONS AT NAME SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS

As the official publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), ***Academic Forensic Pathology*** has the right of first refusal for the publication of any manuscripts based on platform or poster presentations from the NAME Annual and Interim meetings. If an author wishes to publish in a journal other than ***Academic Forensic Pathology***, he/she may discuss the matter with the Editor-In-Chief, and it is possible that an exception might be made in certain situations.

Presentation at a NAME meeting does not guarantee publication in the Journal, as all manuscripts must go through the peer review process.

Abstracts submitted to NAME for oral or poster presentation at a NAME scientific meeting will be published once yearly in a Supplemental Volume. However, these meeting abstracts are not indexed.

## APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the guidelines outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics, COPE (<http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>). Appeals and/or complaints directed to the Editor-In-Chief will be dealt with in a manner compliant with the COPE guidelines. The Editor-In-Chief will respond promptly to complaints.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after communicating their matter(s) directly with the Editor-In-Chief, the complainant is then directed to formally discuss their concerns with the Publisher.

Should the complainant remain unsatisfied after communicating directly with the Publisher, they are then directed to formally discuss their concerns with COPE for final resolution.

**The Editor-In-Chief can be reached via email at: [editor@academicfp.com](mailto:editor@academicfp.com).**

**The Publisher can be reached via email at: [publisher@academicfp.com](mailto:publisher@academicfp.com).**

**The COPE can be accessed online at [www.publicationethics.org](http://www.publicationethics.org).**

## **TRANSPARENCY**

The mission of ***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** is to support and promote the scholarly activities of forensic pathologists (and related professionals), in the global delivery of high quality, timely, and relevant forensic pathology manuscripts to the globe. Given the central role forensic pathology plays in the criminal and civil justice systems, in public health, and in other circles, we are committed to publishing only thoroughly reviewed, scientifically defensible manuscripts. As such, the Editorial Officers and the Publisher Staff are committed to following all Journal Editorial Policies, and to embracing the recommendations and guidelines of relevant oversight commissions such as the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) and the Council of Publication Ethics (COPE).

Furthermore, the Journal is responsible to reporting about our ongoing activities to the Journal Committee at the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME); the Editor-In-Chief and the representative of the Publisher make formal presentations to the NAME Executive Committee and Board of Directors twice each year. The NAME Journal Committee Chair, the Editor-In-Chief, and the Publisher all produce written reports on Journal activities twice per year, and distribute those reports to the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

Finally, the Publisher and NAME created an *ad hoc* committee – the NAME-AFP Journal Special Task Group (now referred to as the Journal Oversight Committee) – to review and comment on Journal policy and procedure, scholarly content, and website functionality. The committee, composed of ten (10) individuals, met for the first time in November, 2016 in La Jolla, CA at the Publisher’s corporate offices. The committee will be meeting twice per year.

The Journal has full editorial independence from the National Association of Medical Examiners. In compliance with international regulations and standards in medical and scientific publishing, the Editor-in-Chief has full editorial independence from both the publisher and the national society.

# **INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS:**

## **MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION**

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** subscribes to the principles outlined by the “*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*” as defined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Additional considerations about manuscript preparation can be obtained from the ICMJE website (<http://www.icmje.org>).

### ***In General***

1. The style of writing should be American English, with American spelling (e.g., “center” and “esophagus”, not “centre” and “oesophagus”).
2. If preparing the manuscript in a country that primarily uses a language other than English, it might be useful to utilize a professional translation service to ensure that the manuscript makes use of appropriate style and diction.
3. All units of measurement should be expressed in metric system units, including body measurements (height and weight) and temperature.
4. All symbols and abbreviations should conform to the *American Medical Association Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors*.
5. The Journal generally does not publish bulleted or numbered lists. Please convert these to either paragraph form or present the information in the form of a table, as appropriate.
6. All manuscripts should be written in Microsoft Word and submitted in native Word format (i.e., not in PDF format).
7. We strongly recommend use of a citation management software package such as Endnote.

## MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

***Academic Forensic Pathology: The Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners*** will only consider manuscripts submitted for peer review through our online submission system ScholarOne (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/afpj>).

Instructions for the proper use of this site are available at the above URL.

## MANUSCRIPT TYPES

Following the descriptions of each article types, the required manuscript sections are listed in parentheses.

### ***Consistency & Cognition***

One of the goals of *Academic Forensic Pathology* is to promote manuscripts that evaluate and promote consistency and an evidence-based approach to the practice of forensic pathology and the concepts that we embrace. This manuscript type applies to those papers that embody this principle. Manuscripts in this category may be review articles or original research. (Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion) [Methods and Results sections may be used].

### ***Review Article***

Most review articles will be solicited; however, unsolicited review articles are also welcome. A review article should be a balanced review of a particular topic. Review Articles may come to conclusions regarding proposed changes with respect to classification, daily practice, or other conventions in forensic pathology. (Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion) [Methods and Results sections may be used].

### ***Original Article***

This is the typical unsolicited manuscript. Most consist of reports of original research and analysis of scientific observations. These may be based around short case reports

or case series, provided they are accompanied by a thoughtful and critical review of the relevant literature. (Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion) [Methods and Results sections may be used].

### ***Methods and Procedures***

This type of manuscript describes the results of new technical advances or refinements of existing techniques in the practice of forensic pathology. It may be based around short case reports or case series. (Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Discussion, Conclusion) [Results section may be used].

### ***Case of the Month***

In the interest of shifting the primary focus of the Journal away from case reports and toward more novel, original research and critical appraisals of the relevant basic science, medical and pathology literature, the Journal will generally publish one Case of the Month each month of the year (3 per issue, 12 per year). Priority consideration will be given to reports written by pathology residents and forensic pathology fellows. Each case should be presented in detail, be illustrated adequately (if appropriate), and include a thoughtful review of the relevant literature. (Abstract, Discussion, Conclusion). Authors may choose to use an Introduction section.

### ***Images in Forensic Pathology***

Forensic pathology is a visual profession that lends itself brilliantly toward the creation of high quality, informative images. Sometimes, those images might even be considered artistic. The Journal will generally publish one Images in Forensic Pathology manuscript each month of the year (3 per issue, 12 per year). The image (scene, macro-, micro-, or other photograph) must be accompanied by a short description of the case, the illustrated finding(s), and their significance. (Discussion only).

### ***Editorial***

Editorials are accepted by invitation only, and will generally be centered on the theme of a particular issue. They represent an opinion rather than a presentation or review of scientific data, and as such, are not peer reviewed.

### ***Letter to the Editor***

Letters to the Editor should address a previously published article. The paper being discussed should be identified and cited within the text, with the reference to the original paper included at the end of the letter. Letters to the Editor are not the appropriate format to present new scientific data; these should be submitted as manuscripts. Letters should begin with the text, "To the Editor:".

## **MANUSCRIPT FORMAT**

### ***Title***

The title should accurately and completely summarize the work. Keep in mind that the title is the first thing a reader sees and is usually the deciding factor on whether the reader continues into the abstract. While no specific rules will be enforced, it is generally more effective for the title to simply state the findings rather than pose a question or use flowery references.

### ***Running Title***

This is a shortened version of the title which may be used for quick reference during the review process, and which will be printed on the footer of the journal article when published. The running title must be no longer than 40 characters, including spaces.

### ***Key Words***

The selection of appropriate key words is important to facilitate appropriate cataloguing of the manuscript and enabling ease of literature searches.

### ***Abstract***

As of September 2, 2017, our Journal is adopting strict policies regarding the use of structured abstracts. In keeping with the expectations of the National Library of Medicine, depending on the manuscript type, an abstract may be *structured* or *unstructured*.

Article types requiring a structured abstract:

*Original research*

*Review papers*

*Practice guidelines*

All other manuscript types may be *unstructured*.

The IMRAD format the standard that reflects the process of scientific discovery. Within that style, authors summarize the INTRODUCTION, METHODS, RESULTS, and DISCUSSION.

Regardless of whether or not an author uses a structured or unstructured abstract, the abstract must summarize the rationale for the study, the design, the findings, and the conclusion(s). Statements such as “the findings will be discussed” are not appropriate. The abstract must be able to stand on its own, and enable a reader to obtain a complete understanding of the findings and conclusions of the work. It is not appropriate to include citations within the abstract, as the cited references will only appear at the end of the paper and thus, the abstract would not be able to stand alone. If facts are stated in the abstract that require citation, it will be necessary to repeat that statement within the Introduction of the paper and cite it there.

All manuscripts with the exception of “Images in Forensic Pathology” are required to have an abstract.

***Introduction***

The most important function of the introduction is to explain the purpose of the study. It sets up the problem and justifies why there is a need for the study. It provides a historical background of the problem and summarizes the current state of knowledge in that particular area. Essentially, the introduction is to “set up” the remainder of the manuscript. **All manuscripts with the exceptions of “Case of the Month” and “Images in Forensic Pathology” are required to have an introduction.**

## ***Methods***

Describe how the research was done. This may be as simple as stating that records were retrospectively reviewed for certain criteria during a certain time period, or describing the search strategy used for an Internet search. This section may also be quite complicated, especially if it involves laboratory procedures or advanced statistics. The most important criterion for this section is that it should be complete enough to allow a reader to be able to independently reproduce the study. It is acceptable to use subheadings within this section to organize different topics within the manuscript. Depending on the nature of the article, a Methods section may not be necessary.

## ***Results***

The results section should summarize the findings of the study. It should reference and complement data represented in the figures and tables. This section should be limited to an objective description of the findings, without stating opinions or coming to any conclusions. It is acceptable to use subheadings within this section to organize different topics within the manuscript. Depending on the nature of the article, a Results section may not be necessary.

## ***Discussion***

The discussion should briefly summarize the findings of the study and then to draw appropriate conclusions and sometimes, give opinions. In a review article, it is the substantive portion of the paper. Two of the most common reasons a manuscript is rejected for publication are 1) that the conclusions are inappropriately drawn from the data presented and 2) that there are other reasonable but differing conclusions that could also be drawn but are either not discussed at all, or that the authors do not argue why their conclusions are more appropriate. It is acceptable to use author-defined subheadings within this section to organize different topics within the manuscript. **All manuscripts are required to have a Discussion section.**

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The conclusion should wrap up the manuscript and summarize the findings of the study. **All manuscripts are required to have a Conclusion section.**

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Dolinak D, Matshes E, Lew E. *Forensic Pathology: Principles & Practice.* 1 ed. San Diego: Academic Press; 2005.

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