



Letter From the Editor-In-Chief





The theme of the first issue of 2017 is "The Opioid Crisis" and the Special Guest Editor is Dr. Tom Gilson. I believe that "crisis" is an appropriate description of the opioid problem facing the nation. Prescription drug abuse and toxicity have skyrocketed in recent years, especially with the emergence of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs and their introduction into clandestinely produced opioids, including both heroin and other "counterfeit" prescription opioids.

This crisis, along with the profoundly increased numbers of opioid-related deaths, has affected medicolegal death investigation systems in an unprecedented manner. Offices are becoming overwhelmed with keeping up with the increased numbers of drug-related deaths to the point that they are needing to hire more death investigators and forensic pathologists. Some offices, however, are not sufficiently supported or funded, and thus, the crisis creates a threat to accreditation as well.

We begin with a pair of articles. The first discusses the need to autopsy all drug-related deaths in order to best serve the public. The second, while acknowledging the desire to function in this way, presents a temporary solution for those who cannot autopsy every potential drug-related death at this time. The next two papers





are reviews on the mechanisms of opioid toxicity and of the emerging family of fentanyl analogs. We then feature a paper discussing the evolution of the opioid crisis in one particular jurisdiction. There is also a paper discussing the medicolegal death investigation of potential drug-related deaths. We have a paper describing the public sharing of information involving the medical examiner and another discussing the benefits of prescription drug monitoring programs for medical examiners. There is also a paper discussing particular challenges for coroner systems in the opioid epidemic. Finally, we feature a paper discussing the role of the Burrage decision in criminal proceedings. We also feature several original articles, two of which address issues relevant to the opioid crisis, and two "Case of the Month" papers.

The second issue of 2017 will be released on June 1; the theme will be "The Death of SIDS" and the Special Guest Editor will be Dr. Melissa Pasquale-Styles. But remember, only about half of each issue is devoted to the specific theme. It's really just a way to promote submission of articles on a particular topic. Manuscripts about any topic can (and should) be submitted at any time! As always, I will continue to encourage the readership to submit articles to the Journal. We depend on submissions from the readership—NAME members like you—to sustain our excellent content.