

**Q: What training is involved?**

**A:** The prerequisite to becoming a forensic pathologist is a qualification as a medical practitioner (including internship).

Following your internship you will train as a specialist in pathology.

The minimum time for specialist training is five years, in a registrar position accredited by the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. This means that although you are undergoing further study, you are actually working and earning as a doctor at the same time. Once you have completed all the requirements and examinations and are accepted as a Fellow of the College, you are entitled to use the letters FRCPA after your name.

Many individuals continue with further professional specialist training, gaining further years of experience in specific areas of forensic pathology.

Forensic pathologists work in public and private settings. Some choose to be independent consultants and may be called to work on large scale disasters.

## Medicine is Pathology

For more information on becoming a Forensic Pathologist go to the College website at [www.rcpa.edu.au](http://www.rcpa.edu.au)

or visit Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine [www.vifm.org/n266.html](http://www.vifm.org/n266.html)

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## A Career in Forensic Pathology



 **RCPA**  
The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

# Forensic Pathology

## Q: What is Forensic Pathology?

**A:** Forensic Pathology is the subspecialty of Pathology that focuses on medicolegal investigations of sudden or unexpected death.

Pathology is the medical specialty concerned with the diagnosis of disease and injuries by examining body tissues and fluids.

## Q: What does a Forensic Pathologist do?

**A:** A forensic pathologist is primarily involved in investigation of death. Identifying the cause of death and reconstructing the circumstances by which the death occurred, is the main day-to-day role of the forensic pathologist. This is performed in a meticulous, painstaking manner.

A forensic pathologist performs autopsy examinations to both the external and internal body organs to discover cause of death.

Forensic pathologists are occasionally required to visit crime scenes or accidents or to testify in court.

## Q: What personal characteristics does a Forensic Pathologist need?

**A:** Varying combinations of the following traits:

- a methodical, widely read mind. Someone known for their patience, as despite TV episodes to the contrary, it is often slow, painstaking work
- good communication skills. You will be required to interface with a cross section of professionals and the public, including government, lawyers, police and next of kin
- a strong stomach! You will routinely be dealing with severely injured, dismembered or even rotting bodies
- the media may become intrusive regarding findings. Sometimes there may be unhappy family members who have difficulty accepting findings. You will need to have a 'thick skin' to avoid over reaction
- you require the mind of a detective, to be on guard against being fooled and to develop insight into the heart and mind of a criminal



## Q: What are the advantages of being a Forensic Pathologist?

**A:** The speciality is very challenging, with a problem-solving slant.

The hours are better than in many other specialities, but it is not a nine-to-five job. You will have the satisfaction of helping with criminal matters and bringing comfort to grieving families.

## Q: What are the disadvantages of being a Forensic Pathologist?

**A:** At times you may become burdened by the continual exposure to the graphic evidence of man's inhumanity to man. The key is balance, you need to maintain regular hobbies and interests in your life.