

RCPA Travel Grant Report –

Virtopsy Basic and Advanced Courses, Zurich, Switzerland

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The purpose of this travel grant was to attend the Basic and Advanced Virtopsy Courses at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. The costs of Registration (course fees) and travel were awarded to me in a travel grant from the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA). Accommodation costs and meals (where not included as part of the courses), and on-duty time were provided by Forensic Science, SA. The Basic Virtopsy Course was from 20-21 March (2 days), and the Advanced Course was held from 22-24 March (3 days).

The courses were very educational and informative and provided me with practical and theoretical knowledge of the processes and interpretation of Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance (MR) images in Post-Mortem examinations. The most useful parts of the Basic Course were the detailed presentations on “reading” (understanding) and interpreting CT and MR images, which I am now able to use in my own casework (where applicable). The discussions on interpretations of post-mortem artefacts were especially interesting. While aimed primarily at Forensic Radiologists and Forensic Pathologists, the information was easily transferrable and applicable to my own work in the field of Forensic Anthropology. This was supplemented by the presentations on the usefulness of CT in Forensic Anthropology during the Advanced Course. The highlights of the Advanced Course were the presentations on interpretation of trauma in CT and MR images. In the Advanced Course we were also shown actual CT/autopsy cases being undertaken by staff at the University of Zurich, so that we could discuss the issues relating to CT images (capture and interpretation) in relation to the Post-Mortem findings. The other interesting parts of the courses were a number of presentations from forensic imaging and pathology experts about their experiences with CT imaging and Disaster Victim Identification (for example, the London Bombings of 2003 and the Victorian Bushfires of 2009).

I will be able to use the knowledge I have gained from attending the Basic and Advanced Virtopsy Courses in my own casework (where needed), and this will be a very useful adjunct to my normal examinations. I will also be able to use the knowledge I have gained about the usefulness and also logistical challenges of using CT in any future Disaster Victim Identification events in which I may be professionally required to assist.

I am extremely grateful to the RCPA Travel Grant and FSSA for their support for me to attend these courses.

Ellie Simpson, 26 April, 2017