

Tara M. Godoy, BSN RN CFN LNC

Godoy Medical Forensics, Inc.

www.GodoyMedical.net

www.Strangulationexpert.com

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EDUCATION

University of Southern California – BS in Nursing, 2001

University of California, Riverside – Certification in Forensic Nursing, 2012

SPECIALTY LICENSES/CERTIFICATIONS/QUALIFICATIONS

- Registered Nurse, CA #586659 (Current)
- Certification in Forensic Nursing
- Qualified to testify as an expert witness in California, Colorado, Nevada & Texas

TESTIFYING EXPERTISE (PRIMARY AREAS)

- Strangulation
 - Blunt Force Trauma
- Record of testimony available upon request*

CURRENT COMMITTEES/PROGRAMS

- Contra Costa County Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (2020)
- Contra Costa County Pilot Program for Strangulation Assessments in Non-Clinical Setting (2020)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Godoy Medical Forensics, Inc. – Livermore, CA

2009 – present

President/CEO/Chief Forensic and Legal Nurse Consultant

- Provide expert consultation in legal cases involving medical care; including medical record review, analysis, research, and merit determination.
- Supervision and oversight of registered nurses reviewing cases and providing expert testimony.
- Expert testimony in areas of strangulation, blunt force trauma, toxicology, nursing standards of care, and other general medical areas.

Experience in:

- Criminal Law – State and Federal, Prosecution & Defense
- Civil – Medical Malpractice, Personal Injury, Family Law

Advanced Death Investigator Training – Santa Ana, CA

2013 – 2017

Course Instructor

- Organized and hosted by Orange County Sheriff's Department
- Peace Officers Standard and Training (POST) certified course
- Instruction in Medical Record Review for Death Investigators, including lecture and interactive class time.
- Instruction in Basic Anatomy for Death Investigators, including lecture and interactive class time

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (continued)

American Nursing Services – Santa Rosa, CA 2009 – 2009

Registry Nurse – Emergency Services

- Support local hospitals in their Emergency Departments
- Perform autonomous duties as an Emergency Room RN

Sonoma Orthopedic Products (Start-up) – Santa Rosa, CA 2008 – 2009

Clinical Nurse Consultant/Device Sales

- Clinical training of orthopedic surgeons and field sales representatives.
- Oversight of surgeon in operating room to ensure correct procedure implementation
- Event planning and implementation of sales and bioskills events

Kinetic Concepts Inc. (KCI) – North San Francisco Bay Area 2007 – 2008

Clinical Nurse Consultant/Device Sales

- Sales and education of extended care staff
- Event planning and implementation of full day educational seminar

Queen of the Valley Medical Center – Napa, CA 2007 – 2007

Staff RN – Emergency Department

- Independent and autonomous care of critically ill and injured
- Patients included trauma patients, geriatrics and pediatrics.

Stanford University Medical Center – Palo Alto, CA 2002 – 2005

Charge Nurse / Staff RN IV – Emergency Department

- Charge nursing duties including management of departmental flow, nursing assignments, per diem staffing issues, and patient complaints.
- Trauma nursing duties including care and stabilization of the critically injured trauma patients.
- Float nursing duties including ability to assist on any patient in any area of the department. Ability to quickly assess and care for patients while covering nurse breaks.
- Headed the department-wide training, implementation and ongoing updates on the Logicare Computer System.

American Medical Response – Santa Clara/San Mateo Counties 2003 – 2004

Employment as a Critical Care Transport Nurse

- Independent care of the critically ill under standard orders of a physician.
- Care included geriatric, pediatric, OB/GYN and psychiatric patients
- Care involved ventilators, multiple infusions, cardiac and fetal monitoring.

Regional Medical Center of San Jose – San Jose, CA 2001 – 2002

Staff RN – Emergency Department

- Independent and autonomous care of critically ill and injured
- Patients included trauma patients, geriatrics and pediatrics.

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (continued)

California Medical Transport – Mountain View, CA 1998 – 1999
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

- Non-emergent and urgent interfacility transport of patients

FORENSIC CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES

AAFS 70th Annual Scientific Meeting, Baltimore, MD - 2019

AAFS 69th Annual Scientific Meeting, Seattle, WA - 2018

AAFS 68th Annual Scientific Meeting, New Orleans, LA - 2017

AAFS 68th Annual Scientific Meeting, Las Vegas, Nevada - 2016

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences is an international organization that is divided into eleven forensic areas of specialty. As a professional society dedicated to the application of science to the law, the AAFS is committed to the promotion of education and the elevation of accuracy, precision, and specificity in the forensic sciences. Conference attendees are welcomed to attend presentations given by any of the eleven sections. Attended topics under the pathology/biology, anthropology, criminalistics, general and jurisprudence sections.

Clinical Forensic Evaluation of Gunshot Wounds – 2014/2015

The program is for law enforcement officers, forensic nurses, emergency medicine and trauma physicians and prosecutors who wish to:

- Understand the importance of recognizing and preserving evidence on ER patients.
- Learn to determine entrance and exit wounds and their range of fire.
- Understand wound ballistics and wounding patterns.
- Get a broad base of forensic knowledge.
- Understand forensic nursing, the science that deals with the relation and application of medical facts to legal issues in living victims.
- Learn the latest techniques for investigating officer-involved shootings.

Advanced Strangulation Course – 2014

This 4-day in-depth training was provided to multidisciplinary professionals. It included the history and research of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Strangulation Crimes and the key aspects of the medical, law enforcement, and prosecution's response to strangulation cases. The course also included effective training techniques; how to use experts in court including tips for testifying, qualifying experts, and helpful tools and resources for both attorneys trying strangulation cases and the experts involved in such cases. Overall, the training prepares the attendee as an expert witness in criminal and civil strangulation assault cases and enables the participant to more successfully handle these cases in their practice as an investigator, attorney, advocate, mental health provider, or medical professional.

Advanced Death Investigator Training Course – 2013

Attended the 2nd week of the Death Investigator Training Course hosted by the Orange County Sheriff's department in Santa Ana, CA. The course is POST certified and offered lecture on Crime labs, Blood spatter, Toolmarks, Firearms, Anthropological Recovery, Forensic Anthropology, Bone labs, Fire Death Investigation, Arson Investigation, Sharp Force Injuries, Asphyxial deaths, Anatomy, Terrorism, PTSD, Stress Management, Forensic Dentistry, Psychological Autopsy and Profiling, Toxicology and Courtroom Testimony.

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FORENSIC CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES (continued)

The 27th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment - 2013

The 25th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment - 2011

Attended lectures focused on the pathology and current medical literature of child abuse, including fractures, bruises, filicide, toxicology and effects of drug exposure, abusive head trauma (shaken baby syndrome), neglect, torture, abdominal trauma, SIDS, pathology and updated literature and evidenced based medicine.

Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course – 2012

The purpose of the course is to train individuals to fill a critical role in medicolegal offices. With the training program offered at Saint Louis University, medicolegal death investigators learn to develop the essential facts regarding the death scene, medical history and other information that assists the Medical Examiner/Coroner in the determination of a person's cause and manner of death. Course content included Asphyxial Deaths, SIDS, Blunt Trauma Fatalities, Child Death Investigation, Fatal Head Trauma, Forensic Toxicology, Forensic Odontology, Gun Shot Wound Fatalities, Cutting and Stabbing Fatalities and Estimation of Time of Death.

FORENSIC NURSE CERTIFICATION COURSES (20 units completed)

Introduction to Forensic Nursing (3.0 units)

Basic principles and techniques of forensic sciences. Topics include the roles and responsibility of collection and preservation of evidence at crime scenes and in the emergency department. The steps involved in the medico- legal investigation of injury and death, beginning at the crime scene and extending through judicial proceedings, are detailed using an extensive collection of slides and case presentations.

Forensic Approaches to Blunt Force and Firearm Injuries (2.0 units)

This course examines injuries incurred from vehicular trauma, stabbings and firearms and other assaults. Emphasis is on recognition and preservation of vital forensic evidence from the victim and within the hospital or emergency department. The principles of injury mechanics and ballistics are illustrated with laboratory findings and case studies of victims. Common omissions and errors in injury assessment and death investigation are discussed.

Crime Scene Preservation and Death Investigation in Health Care Settings (1.0 unit)

Essential factors of crime scene preservation and application of forensic principles, especially the techniques used by forensic scientists to recognize and manage evidence within healthcare settings. Among main topics are: Personnel duties at the crime scene; Evidence management; Evidence categories; Roles and responsibilities of a clinical forensic nurse; An introduction to psychological profiling; Personality assessment of perpetrators; Illustrated case studies focusing on important medico-legal aspects.

Occupational Considerations in Forensic Nursing (2.0 units)

Occupational injuries and work-related deaths are examined in terms of their medicolegal aspects. Topics include: Arson; Burns; Smoke inhalation; Exposure to toxic fumes and chemicals, transportation catastrophes, and other industrial accidents that have forensic implications; Forensic assessment processes required of the forensic nurse in mass casualty management; Dealing with workplace terrorism and hostage scenarios; Post-crisis interviewing of survivors and responders.

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FORENSIC NURSE CERTIFICATION COURSES (continued)

Courtroom Testimony by the Health Care Specialist (1.0 unit)

The role of the forensic nurse specialist in judicial proceedings is presented along with preparations required for the presentation of testimony. Videotaped courtroom scenarios offer participants an opportunity to hear the testimony of expert witnesses and to critique their effectiveness in influencing the outcomes of judicial proceedings.

Forensic Photography in the Health Care Setting (1.0 unit)

Basic forensic photography theory and practice. Emphasis is placed upon: The key components of high-quality; Valuable images that can withstand legal scrutiny; Assist investigators with documentation; Interpret findings at a scene or on a body

Forensic Approaches to Domestic Violence (1.0 unit)

Family violence is explored from several vantage points. Evidentiary sources and documentation are studied as they relate to the identification of domestic violence cases, reporting strategies and referral processes. Also discussed are victimology theory, social and cultural values, and research findings that serve as a basis for establishing appropriate preventive and interventional programs within communities.

Forensic Approaches to Human Abuse Injuries (2.0 units)

The most recent findings on crimes against individuals, such as sexual assault and child abuse, and includes factors that may contribute to violent acts. Evidence collection, preservation and vital documentation, and crime prevention strategies are discussed. Other topics include: Distinguishing accidental trauma from intentional injury; Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy; Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS); Legal aspects of reporting and pursuing suspected or confirmed cases of human abuse

Forensic Approaches to Mental Health Assessment (1.0 unit)

Basic tenets of assessment and intervention with victims and perpetrators are explored. Topics include: Understanding the etiologic and motivational issues and analysis of response patterns to victimization and perpetration; Crime analysis and motivational intent of the aggressor within the context of the commission of the offense is assessed; Myths supporting a victim-blaming belief pattern are explored as part of the overall social response to crime

Introduction to Forensic Pathology for Health Care Specialists (2.0 units)

The evolution of the present-day forensic pathologist and the role(s) he/she plays in implementing the law. Discussions include: The physical changes occurring to the body upon and after death and how these changes impact determination of the cause; Manner and mechanism of death; Law enforcement investigation; Autopsy and after-death body care are explored.

Sexual Assault Examiner Training (4.0 units)

This comprehensive online course prepares qualified health care professionals to perform supervised forensic evaluations of adult and adolescent, male and female sexual assault victims. Upon the completion of this course, you will be able to: Describe the evolution of the sexual assault examiner in the United States; Define rape and sexual assault according to your jurisdiction; Establish nursing priorities of care for any sexual assault patient presenting to the SANE; Understand how the judicial system works once a case has been destined to go to trial; Learn the process of the forensic sexual assault examination and how to collect and preserve evidence; Compare and contrast elements of the Sexual Assault Examination as it varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (or state to state); Collaborate with other multidisciplinary personnel in the management of the sexual assault patient

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PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPERIENCE

Notable Organizations that Tara has presented for:

NAPD – multiple conferences, multiple locations (2015-2019)

Federal Defender Capital Habeas Unit Conference – Mobile, AL (2019)

DUI Defense Lawyers Association – Denver, CO (2016)

NACDL's Making Sense of Science Annual Conference, Las Vegas, NV (2014 & 2016)

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges – Reno, NV (2014)

American Professional Association on the Abuse of Children (2014)

CA Association of Public Defender's Monterey DUI Defense Institute – Monterey, CA (2014)

CA DUI Lawyers Association – Irvine, CA (2014)

International Association of Forensic Nurses (2013)

American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants – Baltimore Chapter (2013)

Chico State Nursing Program – Chico, CA (2013)

Plus, dozens of public defender's offices, bar associations, and other national organizations

PRESENTATIONS/WORKSHOPS CURRENTLY OFFERED

“Strangulation: Evaluating Strangulation Evidence from a Medical Perspective”

Strangulation/suffocation in domestic violence is gaining momentum in the criminal courts as family violence groups advocate for stronger sentencing and more felony charges. Educating attorneys and judges is critical to ensure judgments are made based on facts and medical science. This presentation discusses the statistics of these assaults and what may be present in the discovery. Using case studies, medical charts and photographs, the audience will learn pertinent vocabulary and anatomy with a common goal of realizing the main issues that will drive a case to a fair resolution. Attendees will leave with a knowledge of what may constitute Great or Significant Bodily Injury, the common injuries seen and what to expect from experts.

“Medical Record Review: Finding the Information You Need Without Googling Every Medical Term” Also presented as “Reading Medical Records: A Primer for Attorneys” (Case Study: Attempted Murder)

A presentation designed to teach attorneys the ins and outs of medical records, including information on types of documents, where to find important details regarding the hospitalization, and a review of common issues in medicine that are pertinent to the legal field. The records included in the presentation follow an attempted murder case and highlight not only what is in the records but also what might be missing. The purpose of the presentation is to assist attorneys in focusing their review of medical records and to highlight the records that contain the information that both civil and criminal attorneys are commonly seeking.

“Head Trauma, Consent and Intoxication - What to look for in EVERY case.”

This presentation covers the different types of Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) that result from trauma to the brain in order to build a foundation of how trauma affects the brain; and then dives into the application in criminal cases. Discussion includes aggressive behavior, alcohol intoxication and consent capacity after TBI. Criminal attorneys and investigators for both the prosecution and defense would benefit from understanding the affect that head trauma has on defendants and/or victims in criminal cases.

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“Blunt Force Trauma: What the Skin Can Tell Us”– Part I (Superficial Injuries)

A presentation designed to teach attorneys and investigators about various external injuries that result from Blunt Force Trauma. Bruises/Contusions, Abrasions, Lacerations and Avulsions are all discussed with definitions, examples and information on each wound. Dating of bruises is included; as well as information on multiple injuries. The purpose of the presentation is to assist attorneys and investigators in understanding the causative factors behind injuries from Blunt Force Trauma and provide them with in-depth knowledge regarding the potential indications of such injuries.

PRESENTATIONS/WORKSHOPS PREVIOUSLY OFFERED

Medical Record Review Workshop, 4 hours MCLE – Feb, 2015

This workshop starts with a 1 hour presentation on medical record review and then moves into small groups. The groups review discovery in cases and discuss findings, ask questions and learn how to find medical facts within the charts.

“Reading Medical Records: A Primer for Attorneys” (Case Study: Abusive Head Trauma)

A presentation designed to teach attorneys the ins and outs of medical records, including information on types of documents, where to find important details regarding the hospitalization, and a review of common issues in medicine that are pertinent to the legal field. The records included in the presentation follow an abusive head trauma case and highlight not only what is in the records but also what is missing. The purpose of the presentation is to assist attorneys in focusing their review of medical records and to highlight the records that contain the information that both civil and criminal attorneys are commonly seeking.

“Blunt Force Trauma: What Goes on in the Inside”– Part II (Internal Injuries)

A presentation designed to teach attorneys and investigators about various internal injuries that result from Blunt Force Trauma. A head to toe review of various injuries with graphic illustrations and case examples provides an in-depth understanding of how these injuries occur, the mechanism behind them, and the potential complications/prognosis.

“Bruises & Decubitus: Oh, The Stories They Tell”

This presentation contains the Blunt Force Trauma Part I Presentation and then goes into greater detail about pressure ulcers. It is designed to teach attorneys and investigators about various injuries that result from Blunt Force Trauma. Bruises/Contusions, Abrasions, Lacerations and Avulsions are all discussed with definitions, examples and information on each wound. Dating of bruises is included as well as information on multiple injuries. Pressure ulcer prevention, assessment and staging are also discussed.

“Abusive Head Trauma: Crossing the Boundary from Medicine to Law/Current Controversies and Opposing Theories”

A presentation designed to review the current controversies in medicine that surround Shaken Baby Cases, known medically as Abusive Head Trauma (AHT). These are complex cases that involve extensive medical records and require that the attorney comprehend the basic pathophysiology of intracranial hemorrhaging and retinal hemorrhages. Knowledge of the current literature involving the biomechanics and the conditions considered to mimic the injuries seen in AHT is also a necessity. After attending this presentation, participants will have a better understanding of the injuries that are suspicious for AHT, the medical conditions that mimic them, and a broader knowledge base of the scientific literature relevant to these cases.

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“Child Abuse and Neglect”

A presentation designed at the request of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to educate on the various aspects of child abuse and neglect. Topics covered included bruising and other soft tissue injuries; internal injuries; medical abuse; sexual abuse; and abusive head trauma.

“Legal Nurse Consulting in Criminal Law” - Webinar only

A presentation designed for nurses interested in expanding their scope to include legal nurse consulting services to criminal attorneys. Differences between criminal and civil cases are discussed and how nurses might support criminal attorneys using their civil experience. Case examples are supplied for better understanding of the role of the nurse.

“Medically Acceptable Blood Draws: Not as Simple as it Looks”

A presentation designed to teach attorneys and investigators about blood draw standards and practices that ensure the safety of the patient and the technician: Includes a review of equipment, technique, contraindications, and complications. Optional live demonstration of a blood draw during the presentation.

PUBLICATIONS

Godoy, T. M. (2011, Winter). Child Maltreatment: A Review of Abuse, Neglect and Mimics. (J. S. Benjamin, Ed.) *Florida Defender*, 23(3), pp. 14-17.

Godoy, T. M. (2011, July/August). Reading Medical Records: A Primer for Attorneys. (J. R. Potter, Ed.) *The Oregon Defense Attorney*, 32(4), pp. 12-13.

Godoy, T. M. (2011, Summer). Reading Medical Records: A Primer for Attorneys. (D. Byrd, & K. L. Bradley, Eds.) *Florida Defender*, 23(2), pp. 38-40.

Godoy, T. M. (2012, Spring). Medical Records and Domestic Violence. (J. S. Benjamin, & K. L. Bradley, Eds.) *Florida Defender*, 24(1), pp. 14, 18.

GodoyMedical.net Blog & Newsletter – primary contributor/editor, monthly posts 2011-2019

SMALL GROUP FACILITATION

CA Association of Public Defender’s Monterey DUI Defense Institute – Monterey, CA – June, 2012

CA Association of Public Defender’s Monterey DUI Defense Institute – Monterey, CA – June, 2013

CLINICAL CERTIFICATIONS PREVIOUSLY HELD

- Trauma Nurse Core Curriculum (TNCC)
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)
- Basic Life Support (BLS)

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AFFILIATIONS/AWARDS

- USC Chair's Circle – Fall 2000
- Sigma Theta Tau – International Nursing Honor Society (since 2001)
- International Association of Forensic Nurses (since 2012)
 - IAFN Abstract Reviewer - 2016
- Member – American College of Forensic Examiners Institute (since 2014)
- Affiliate Member – Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine (2015-2019)
- General Member – AAFS (Since 2016)
- Member – NACDL, CACJ (since 2016)
- Member – CDAA (since 2017)
- Charter Member – Academy of Forensic Nursing (since 2018)