



# Walworth County Medical Examiner's Office

Fall 2017

Volume 1, Number 1

## In This Issue

- Reportable Deaths and Hospice
- Meet the Staff at the Medical Examiner's Office

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Gunshot Wound**  
**and Pattern Injury**  
**Presentation**  
**October 19, 2017**  
**9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**  
**Call for details**

### Walworth County Medical Examiner's Office

1770 County Road NN  
Elkhorn, WI 53121  
Phone: (262) 741-4729  
Fax: (262-741-4487  
[www.co.walworth.wi.us](http://www.co.walworth.wi.us)

**Lynda Biedrzycki,**  
**MD**  
**Medical Examiner**

**Gina Carver**  
**Lead Investigator**

#### Deputy Medical Examiners

Ronald W. Wilson  
Gary Rowland, RN  
Dawn Kiernan  
Karin Ross, RN  
Kimberly Rossi  
Lisa Loepke, RN

**To report a death,**  
**please call:**  
**(262) 741-4401**

## Reportable Deaths and Hospice

Did you ever wonder why some deaths are not reportable to the Medical Examiner? If we look at 2016 statistics, as an example, 928 people died in Walworth County. 315 of those deaths were reportable to the Medical Examiner's Office with another 296 reviewed before cremation (for a total of 66% of deaths). Some instances of non-reportable deaths would be those natural deaths where the decedent was an inpatient of a local hospital or a resident of a local nursing home. Another would be a patient who died naturally at their home under hospice.

WI State Statute 979.01 gives guidance to which deaths are reportable to the Medical Examiner. In a nutshell: homicides, suicides, deaths due to poisoning, and any death with unexplained, unusual or suspicious circumstances. Additionally and probably seen the most often, are all deaths following accidents, whether the injury is or is not the primary cause of death.

Another component is the actual pronouncing of death. At a hospital, the doctors pronounce death. At a nursing home, an LPN or RN can call the treating physician who pronounces by phone. Hospice RNs are also legally able to pronounce their patients. It is the home or scene deaths, where the decedent is not under hospice, that an ME is needed to respond.

If we start with hospice deaths, you can start to see a pattern as to when we become involved. A patient enters into hospice for end-of-life care. Hospice nurses are trained to understand WI § 979 and more times than not, they have reportable deaths down pat. If they have a patient who has had a fall, with or without injury, they report the death. If they are treating a patient whose death follows injuries from a motor vehicle accident, suicide attempt, etc. – they call our office. The same would be true of hospitals and nursing homes.

Law enforcement and funeral homes are a second set of eyes and ears in death. If law enforcement arrives on scene for a death, and it appears the death is natural and was expected (i.e. 99-year-old male unresponsive lying peacefully in bed), one question could be: Was hospice involved? Not surprisingly, a family may panic when death occurs, even under hospice. The instructions they have received to call the hospice nurse instead of 911 fly out the window in their attempt to get help. But hospice deaths are systematically set up so that families can be supported by their hospice nurse and funeral home instead of all the bells and whistles of an ambulance and police car. Should law enforcement arrive and the family says yes, the decedent was enrolled into hospice, it will likely not be an ME case. It is okay for the family to then call the hospice nurse. Law enforcement can (and should) speak with the nurse and make sure the patient was enrolled. You would then not need the MEO. BUT, if you see something suspicious, contact our office and we can discuss the scene. We're here to help and your observations may be what are needed to start a death investigation.

And lastly, we are grateful for our local funeral homes that call us when they have been told the ME was not notified but they have seen an injury or hear of something which falls into our jurisdiction. It is only through a joint effort with law enforcement, funeral homes, medical staff and facilities, and families that we have an accurate and thorough death investigation.

# Meet the Staff at the Medical Examiner's Office



**Lynda Biedrzycki, MD**  
**Medical Examiner**

I'm from Milwaukee and went to school at Marquette (B.A.) and MCW (M.D.). After training in other places including Chicago (internal medicine), San Diego (pathology), Detroit (forensic pathology) and Boston (cardiac pathology), I returned home to practice. My husband is a pediatric pathologist. We have one daughter and four dogs.

**Ron Wilson**  
**Deputy Medical Examiner**  
*(Staff member since 2001)*

I am a Delavan native and served in the Navy during the Vietnam era. I was a Deputy Sheriff from 1974-2001, starting off in patrol and spending time in both civil process and detective divisions. I started out as a Deputy Coroner in May 2001 and became a Deputy Medical Examiner in 2015.



**Gina Carver, D-ABMDI**  
**Lead Investigator**  
*(Staff member since 2015)*

My experience in death investigation started with Kenosha County in 2005 when I joined the Medical Examiner's Office. I took on the role of Chief Deputy Medical Examiner in 2009, and became a diplomat with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators in 2010. When I heard that Walworth County was moving to a Medical Examiner system and would be working with the doctors in Waukesha, I was excited to join the team.



**Gary Rowland, RN**  
**Deputy Medical Examiner**  
*(Staff member since 2015)*

I am a Delavan native, my wife and I moved to LaGrange after serving in the US Navy. I am the father of three daughters and one son. We have one granddaughter, who was born this past October. I went into the medical field in the 90's after joining the Lauderdale-LaGrange Fire Department. When not visiting the kids I enjoy fishing and home remodeling projects, which my kids seem to keep me busy doing...



**Karin Ross, RN**  
**Deputy Medical Examiner**  
*(Staff member since 2015)*

I grew up in Walworth and attended Rockford Memorial School of Nursing. After graduation, I started working at Aurora - Lakeland in the ICU, OB, Jail Nurse, House Supervisor and finally in the Emergency Room for the last 10 years. I have been married for 35 years to an Executive Chef and we have three adult children.



**Kimberly Rossi**  
**Deputy Medical Examiner**  
*(Staff member since 2015)*

I started my career in death investigation in 2006 and am excited to be back in the field after taking a few years off. In addition to working for Walworth County, I work full time at a non-profit in Kenosha, working with criminal offenders. In my spare time, I enjoy all things Green Bay Packers, traveling, and spending time with my family.



**Lisa Loepke, RN**  
**Deputy Medical Examiner**  
*(Staff member since 2016)*

I live in Walworth Township with my husband of 27 years and 2 boys. I started working for Walworth County in 1987 as a CNA at Lakeland Nursing Home while going to school for nursing. I graduated in 1991 and transferred to Aurora - Lakeland Hospital ICU. In 2000, I switched to the Emergency Department and I have been there since. I was a member of the Walworth County SWAT team for 5 years as a medic, and I have been an EMT since 2012. I have always been interested in Forensic science and obtained a certificate in Forensic Nursing 2009.



**Dawn Kiernan**  
**Deputy Medical Examiner**  
*(Staff member since 2015)*

I am going on my third year as a Deputy Medical Examiner for Walworth County. Prior to joining the Medical Examiner team, I was an advanced EMT on a volunteer department within Walworth County and a full time dental assistant. What I love about my position within the Medical Examiner's Office is the investigations of my cases and working with the families who have lost loved ones. My goal is to always be compassionate and considerate of the families' needs.



**Zelda Okia, MD**  
**Associate Medical Examiner**

I was born in Uganda, East Africa and came to America when I was five years old. I obtained my medical degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I did a pathology residency in New York and a surgical pathology fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in MN. Subsequently, I worked as a pathologist at Columbia Hospital in Milwaukee before doing a Forensic Pathology Fellowship in 2008 with the Medical College of Wisconsin. I have a special interest in drug abuse/overdose prevention, am active in Waukesha County Drug Free Communities, and I recently wrote a book, titled Zombie Effects, where I share my experiences as a medical examiner during the opioid crisis. I recently married my best friend and we live in Waukesha.



**Amy Sheil, MD**  
**Associate Medical Examiner**

I studied art and biology in college, and attended Creighton University for medicine. My pathology residency and fellowship training occurred in South Carolina, Florida, and Ohio. After practicing pediatric pathology for several years, I joined the Medical Examiner's Office in 2015. Other than work, I enjoy my family and vacations to the beach.