

## 2020 – A VISION FOR FORENSIC MEDICINE

*We need a dream which will stir the imagination of all the forensic medicine experts. It should be a motivating force for them. We should identify the bottle necks and suggest their possible solutions. To meet this objective this is my vision statement for the year 2020.*

*There have been a lot of progress in the field of forensic medicine and toxicology during the 20th century and which is keeping its pace in the 21st century. But if we compare this progress with the other fields of medical specialties, I feel our speed requires a lot of acceleration. Are we sure where we want this subject to be? Do we want it at the top or let it linger on the present condition which is definitely not what we will like it to remain?*

*We must know what our strengths are and what are our weaknesses? We will have to consolidate our strengths and remove our deficiencies. Here I am presenting a range of interesting possibilities.*

*The biggest challenge is to throw away the garb of doom's doctor. I will be happy if I have not to explain everybody whom I meet that what is Forensic Medicine. It should be known to everybody what forensic medicine is; and this will be possible only if we will do our duty sincerely, honestly and with a dedication. In this way we will give the service to the society with a difference and they will realize that doctors of forensic medicine are our real friends who provide us good services at the most crucial times.*

*We will have to change the outlook of the mortuaries. We will have to try that mortuaries are not located at the dirtiest or dead location of the hospital. It should be like any other department of the hospital, neat and clean. It should not be the last priority of the administration of the hospital but the first priority to provide the ultimate service to the humanity with a dignity. When the bodies are brought to the mortuaries they should be received in the gentlest way possible keeping in mind the distress of the people who are bringing it. They are under the greatest shock of their life and they should be handled with sympathy and affection. This can be best done by the forensic nurses rather than the uneducated class IV employees or the sweepers of the department. There should be either cold storage rooms or cold chambers to keep the dead bodies. They should never be put on the floor of the mortuaries perhaps that is inhumane. There should be good quality steel tables for dissection along with proper sterile instruments. We should take care of people working with us to protect them from the infectious and contagious diseases. If the dead bodies are mutilated we should reconstruct them before handing them over to their relatives. Those should be properly washed and properly draped and a little make up of the face will improve the appearances a lot. Preparing of the postmortem report should be computerized and report should be delivered immediately. Whole record should be computerized so that anybody needing copy of the postmortem report can get it at the click of the mouse. There should be facilities to embalm the dead body or keep the dead body after postmortem examination in the cold chambers if it is demanded by the relatives of the deceased. Procedure of the postmortem should be transparent. Facilities for radiological examination should be available itself in the mortuaries so that patients are not disturbed in the radiology department when dead bodies are examined in the radiology department.*

*All the investigations required at the postmortem examination should be available at the mortuary complex whether it is the chemical examination of viscera or histo-pathological examination of the viscera. I will suggest that a forensic science laboratory should be a part of the complex of the mortuary block. In such circumstances right from examination of weapons to DNA fingerprinting should be possible at the same locality so that there is no degradation of samples during transport and results can be provided at the earliest which will help in better investigation of the cases. There should be quality control to check the validity of the tests performed at different centers.*

*Clinical forensic medicine also needs a lot of improvement. There should be separate examination room for the victims of violence. Victims of violence also need privacy. There should be facilities for the first aid which can be easily provided by the forensic nurses. While doing this job they will also take care that valuable trace evidences which can help to solve the cases are not thrown to the trash bins or waste baskets.*

*Examinations of victims of sexual violence also need special care and sympathy. The victims should be examined in such a manner that they do not have to repeat the devastating experience again and again to everybody. There should be a cell where police officer, doctor, forensic nurse, social worker and a forensic psychiatrist should be there to listen, examine, treat and console the victim. Medicolegal examination report should be prepared there only and all the required samples should be preserved there. Colposcope and photographic facilities should be present to preserve the valuable evidences. We will have to dispose off the unwilling, grudging gynecologists in the most tender situations.*

*Toxicology needs a lot of improvement. There should be no hesitation to treat the patients of poisoning by the forensic toxicologists rather than general physician. Number of poisons is increasing day by day and so is the knowledge to diagnose and treat them. It will be a burden on the general physician to tackle all such patients particularly when medicolegal aspects are involved in all such cases. Facilities should be present there only to find out the type of poison and its concentration. Advanced equipment like gas chromatography will be very helpful for this and many precious lives can be saved. There should be a regular contact between treating doctors and the poison control centers of the locality by phones or internet and the required information may be available for all poisons at the click of the mouse.*

*As all other specialties are progressing well in the private circle; we will have to think that all services rendered by forensic medicine experts could be provided privately. Of course law will have to be amended in some situations. This is possible only if all forensic medicine experts give their services honestly and scientifically which will be able to stand the scrutiny of the time and the law. The competition provided by the private sector will act as a catalyst to improve the government services in the field of forensic medicine.*

*Medical education is another thrust area where a lot of improvement is required. There should be more practical training of the undergraduates and postgraduates. The students should attend more postmortem cases and medico-legal injury cases. They should be taken to the courts to make them understand what the courts want from the doctors. LCD projectors and computers with multimedia facilities should be available in the class rooms. Old generation teachers should be given computer training so that they become computer friendly.*

*In India investigation of criminal cases is done by the police personnel who have little knowledge of forensic medicine. I suggest that forensic medicine doctors should be involved with such investigations at all levels rather than seeking their opinion later on when all trace evidences have been lost. It is like crying over spilt milk. Forensic medicine experts should acquire the role of MEDICAL DETECTIVES. This role will create of new employment opportunities for the forensic medicine experts. They should visit the crime scene along with forensic nurses and police people and it will greatly increase the success of prosecution cases on the scientific basis. Old generation should work hand in hand with the young budding forensic medicine experts when zeal of the younger and experience of the elders will make a perfect combination to take this forensic medicine speciality to the new heights.*

*I hope this vision 2020 will arouse your interest and debate which will help us to refine it further in the years to come. Here I have presented some crucial issues for the forensic medicine experts and crucial decision points for the authorities and the governments to consider and evaluate to give this speciality a new glory within the next two decades.*

**Prof. R.K.Gorea**