European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) on-site inspection forms for forensic pathology, anthropology, odontology, genetics, entomology and toxicology for forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation: the Parma form

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Abstract:	Further to a previous publication by the European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) concerning on-site forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation, this publications provides guidance for forensic medical specialists, pathologists and, where present, coroners' activity at a scene of death inspection and to harmonise the procedures for a correct search, detection, collection, sampling and storage of all elements which may be useful as evidence, and ensure documentation of all these steps. This ECLM's inspection form provides a checklist to be used on-site for the investigation of a corpse present at a crime or suspicious death scene. It permits the collection of all relevant data not only for the pathologist, but also for forensic anthropologists, odontologists, geneticists, entomologists and toxicologists, thus supporting a collaborative work approach. Detailed instructions for the completion of forms are provided.
Author Comments:	Dear Editor, as a representative for Italy in the European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) board, I'm sending for publication in your Journal the ECLM On-site inspection form, that is intended to be an official ECLM document, which follows the previous one: Cusack D, Ferrara S D, Keller E, Ludes B, Mangin P, Väli M, Vieira N (2017) European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) principles for on-site forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation. Int J Legal Med 131(4):1119-1122. DOI:10.1007/s00414-016-1479-0. ECLM believes that this topic will gain much attention from readers and that this paper will be much cited. As it concerns a document of interest also for other forensic sciences specialists, it has been reviewed also by representatives of toxicologists, geneticists, odontologists, antropologists and entomologists, as confirmed by authors list. A pdf with the on-site inspection form is sent as supplementary material, as to allow readers to print and use it. The logo of the ECLM, which appears at the bottom of each page of the document, is supplied as supplementary material. As IJLM is the official journal of IALM, ECLM hopes you will accept this paper for publication. Best regards. Rossana Cecchi
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European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) on-site inspection forms for Forensic Pathology, Anthropology, Odontology, Genetics, Entomology and Toxicology for forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation: The Parma form.

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Abstract

Further to a previous publication by the European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) concerning on-site forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation, this publications provides guidance for forensic medical specialists, pathologists and, where present, coroners' activity at a scene of death inspection and to harmonise the procedures for a correct search, detection, collection, sampling and storage of all elements which may be useful as evidence, and ensure documentation of all these steps.

This ECLM's inspection form provides a checklist to be used on-site for the investigation of a corpse present at a crime or suspicious death scene. It permits the collection of all relevant data not only for the pathologist, but also for forensic anthropologists, odontologists, geneticists, entomologists and toxicologists, thus supporting a collaborative work approach.

Detailed instructions for the completion of forms are provided.

Key words: scene of crime, on-site inspection, forensic pathology, forensic sciences, protocol

Introduction

The European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) has previously outlined the principles for on-site forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation [1].

That document focussed in detail on the initial assessment on arrival at site by the forensic medical specialist or pathologists (from now defined as FP) including inspection and examination of the body and site, collection and preservation of relevant elements and other related matters..

Advancing on this to further facilitate the FP's activity during a scene of crime inspection and, to allow optimal search, detection, collection, sampling, storage and documentation of all evidence, the ECLM has devised on-site inspection forms, adapted according to the most relevant documents on crime scene investigation and forensic autopsy (2-5].

The constant evolution of forensic sciences represents a challenge for the forensic medical specialists, who are expected to have current qualification and wider-ranging skills and competencies for the most appropriate interpretation of judicial cases.

An optimal investigative approach would ideally require the personal participation to the inspection of all the range of experts to ensure an effective and complete sampling and sharing of the informative elements characterizing the whole investigation. This is not always possible.

Therefore because of the multidisciplinary investigative approach that a such cases may need, the ECLM working group considered developing a proforma approach allowing multiple data collection at the time of crime scene inspection. This tool ensures comprehensive evidence detection and information collection, reducing the risk of disregarding potentially important information for further multidisciplinary analysis or jeopardizing later comparisons and consultations between experts. Based on these considerations, the idea of establishing up a "guide tool" to support the FP aimed at gathering essential information for the various disciplines that must be recorded at the time of the inspection and can subsequently be shared with other experts was developed.

The ECLM proposes operational lines for collecting information and sampling to support the primary FP in carrying out the inspection activity. These are accompanied by instructions to complete six proforma consisting of one page intended for collection of medico-legal data, and by five supplementary pages for collection of evidence relevant to other disciplines at the investigation scene, namely: anthropology, odontology, genetics, entomology and toxicology. These additional pages will be completed dependent on the specifics and needs of the forensic case under investigation.

These operational lines were based originally on a protocol shared by the Institute of Legal Medicine of Parma initially with the Boards of the scientific groups related to five forensic disciplines (Italian Group of Forensic Pathologists; Italian Group of Forensic Geneticists; Italian Group of Forensic Toxicologist; Italian Group of Forensic Anthropologists; and Italian Group of Forensic Entomologists), and then with the Italian Society of Legal Medicine[1]. The Italian Young Legal Doctors Council validated the forms applying them in Italy [6].

These on-site inspection forms were shared with the ECLM Board and modified according to the needs in a broad European context.

APPLIED METHODOLOGY

[1] The Italian version of the forms is available at the link https://www.simlaweb.it/procedure-sopralluogo/…

A multidisciplinary approach was used to develop the proforma, primarily aimed to preparing an effective, complete and easy to use tool. Contents and graphics were simplified to provide a practical and manageable tool.

The on-site inspection forms are composed of six sections: forensic pathology; forensic anthropology; forensic odontology; forensic genetics; forensic entomology; and forensic toxicology. Each section is marked with an alphanumeric code at the top right of each page: the letter indicates the specialist area, while the number is referred to the numerical progression of the pages. The cards are accompanied by a note (Fig. 1) containing the necessary instructions for the understanding of the content and for the compilation of the forms.

Within the section entitled 'Forensic Pathologist' (F/1 and F/2) tables, graphs and images have been inserted for the characterization of places, environmental conditions and the state of the corpse (position, degree of conservation, etc.) for the purpose of a "guided" compilation and as a support for the subsequent thanatogram. In the section relating to the injury an empty space was left for any graphical representation or notes.

At the end of the form, with the aims of promoting interdisciplinary interaction, the person completing is advised to add the following information:

1. Photos and video: the wide availability of digital tools today makes it easy to record photographic and video surveys which, where available, can be extremely useful for all disciplines;
2. Samples: for other specialists it may be useful to know the nature of evidence collected from the scene which is available for further analyses;
3. Specialist forms filled: the knowledge of different possibilities for in-depth analysis may permit better investigation;
4. Name of the FP(s) attending the scene and their contact details.

In the specialized proforma (A/1, A/2, O/1, E/1, G/1, T/1) there are similar tables and drawings to facilitate the FP in the collection of information and sampling. Accuracy in labelling of the collected samples and exhibits is fundamental in ensuring the chain of custody and the quality of the sampling. Similarly, to support operators in dealing with the identification and collection of other evidence (e.g., insect and skeletal remains), the forms are integrated with images and graphic representations. At the conclusion of the

inspection, the FP will provide a copy of the completed forms to each specialist. Instructions for completing the forms are available attached to the forms.

The end result is a compilation method, partly directed and partly free text, with the intention of minimising the time for proforma completion without limiting the person completing in identifying peculiarities that characterize the specific case, whilst ensuring complete documentation of the body inspection at the scene.

The technical-scientific prerequisites for the guidelines represent a complex and articulated process that requires adherence to controlled methods and approaches that must be observed to obtain results moderated by the different degrees of evidence.

In conclusion, it is important to underline that the forms are an adjunct during the inspection and will be useful for the subsequent drafting of the inspection report, which may or may not be accompanied by the filled forms. To summarize, the proposed on-site forms allow the FP to collect the needed information, both at a general and specialized level, and allow all the experts involved to communicate effectively and to work in close synergy. It provides all disciplines an overview of the case. The aim of this publication is to propose such documentation as an operational method available for harmonisation and setting a common standard in the field. The forms will also ensure a systematic examination from the medico-legal point of view by facilitating a comprehensive checklist of the steps to be taken.

Finally, it is important to underline that the forms must be interpreted as an aid during on-site inspection and as a check-list for the subsequent drafting of the inspection report, which may or may not be accompanied by the completed forms.

Declarations

All authors agreed with the content gave explicit consent to submit the work.

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Authors' contributions All authors made substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; drafted the work or revised it critically for important intellectual content; approved the version to be published; and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

References

[1] Cusack D, Ferrara S D, Keller E, Ludes B, Mangin P, Väli M, Vieira N (2017) European Council of Legal Medicine (ECLM) principles for on-site forensic and medico-legal scene and corpse investigation. Int J Legal Med 131(4):1119-1122. DOI:10.1007/s00414-016-1479-0

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[6] Cecchi R, Cucurachi N, Schirripa ML, Marezza F, Anzillotti L, Banchini A, Donato L, Gherardi M, Pelotti S, Favretto D, Vanin S, Cattaneo C, Pinchi V, Zoja R (2020) Schede di sopralluogo intergruppi: il protocollo di Parma (Intergroup Crime Scene Investigation Forms: The Parma Protocol), Riv.Ital.Med.Leg. 42, 1: 451-476

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CORRECT COMPILATION OF THE FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH

The purpose of this form is to facilitate the forensic pathologist's or the forensic medical specialist's (FP) activity during a scene of death inspection, to allow appropriate search, detection, collection, sampling and storage of all useful evidence.
The indications for a correct filling of the forms for forensic pathology, also including a section of forensic genetics, forensic toxicology, forensic anthropology, forensic odontology and forensic entomology are reported below.

Instructions:

Please follow the instructions, filling in the form in a readable manner (signature included), and use permanent ink to identify the samples. It is recommended to document each step of both site inspection and sampling with related photographic report.

Specifications:

F/1

1. **ARRIVAL AT SCENE**: the forensic pathologist must record the exact arrival time at the scene and report the circumstances of the discovery of the corpse (including remains or bones), so as to differentiate activities which already occurred before his/her arrival. Moreover, he/she will have to report which operators intervened on the site (Fire fighters, police officers and/or other operators) to gain knowledge about their activities (collected information, any findings, first aid activities, etc.).
2. **DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE:** collect all the information about weather and environmental conditions, starting with a general description up to detailed information, paying attention to the area where the corpse is found, through photographic documentation and notes.
3. **DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPSE:** measure the cadaveric and environmental temperature, report the type of exposure and the conservation of the corpse, considering its location in the environment and describing the clothing. Examine and describe necroscopic findings, in order to estimate, if possible, the post mortem interval (PMI).

F/2

1. **INJURIES DETECTABLE ON THE CORPSE:** proceed to a first external examination, distinguishing different types of lesions, if present.
2. **GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPSE AND THE MAIN REFERENCE POINTS OF THE SCENE:** sketch or describe the position of the corpse at the time of the pathologist's inspection.

A/1-A/2

1. **SKELETAL REMAINS ON THE SITE**: collect all bones and teeth and observe and indicate any anatomical articulation in situ.
2. **O/1**

1. **DENTAL FORMULA *IN SITU*:** report which teeth are in their anatomical site. Two dental forms are included– please refer to plan 1 – permanent dentition and plan 2 - deciduous dentition.
2. **TEETH:** as for small bones, search for teeth near the corpse in case of empty dental alveoli. Teeth that could be detached during the transport or handling of the corpse, must be removed from their alveolus during the site inspection and kept in separate tubes/vials. Recover and sample any prosthetic and orthodontic appliances displaced from the corpse or recovered in the site.

E/1

1. **DESCRIPTION OF ENTOMOLOGICAL EVIDENCE:** write down on the images on the from E/1 the colonisations of diptera (flies) or coleoptera (beetles) and their developmental stage, specifying their location on the body/scene. Collect as much as possible from each sampling site, put the sample in resealable plastic boxes, each labelled with the appropriate code.

G/1

1. **BIOLOGICAL TRACES IN THE ENVIRONMENT:** proceed to a careful examination of the biological traces in the environment, distinguishing blood traces from other biological traces (saliva, seminal fluid, urine, vomit, etc.).
2. **BIOLOGICAL TRACES ON THE CORPSE:** proceed to a general inspection of the corpse, paying particular attention to sensitive areas and sampling the traces using sterile swabs, eventually moistened with distilled water or physiological solution in case of dry traces. Such samples must be kept in paper bags. Biological samples must be frozen as soon as possible. It is recommended to make a double sampling with two different swabs, changing gloves between the two collections, and to use a protection mask. Sampling of sub-nail material must be performed with dedicated swabs, one swab per nail. Nails must be individually collected. Bite mark traces must be sampled immediately at the site of death with dedicated photographic report equipped with metric references and saliva DNA samples.

T/1

1. **DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLING OF TOXICOLOGICAL INTEREST:** proceed to the collection of the information related to suspected substances –also through photographic report- and report any smell/odour of the scene by filling the form.

N.B. It is essential to establish a report for the chain of custody, where each sample transfer will be reported and signed by each operator. This report must contain the ID code, the date of the operations carried out and the identity of the executor/s with their signature.

Fig. 1. Instructions for the completion of the forms

F/1

FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH

Forensic Pathologist:	**other professionals (qualification):**
Date, time and circumstances of the corpse finding	
Date, hour and circumstances when the deceased was seen alive the last time	
Intervention of other professionals (first aid, police, etc)	□ Yes, with □ without □ displacement of the corpse □ No
Date and time of the arrival of the forensic pathologist	

IDENTITY OF THE CORPSE *(Complete by ticking the item found during the site inspection)*

Identity:	**Name and Surname:**	**Sex:**	**Presumed age:**
Presumed□ Known□ (……) Unknown □		M□ F□ undetermined □	

FEATURES OF THE SITE *(Complete by ticking the item found during the survey)*

Weather Conditions	**Type of indoor environment** (e.g., room, garage, etc.)	**Type of outdoor environment**
Sunny □ Rainy □ Windy□ Cloudy □ Part. Cloudy □ Foggy □ Snow□	Entrance door: opened □ closed □ (specify if totally opened, partially opened, locked or not etc): ……	Urban environment □
		Mountain □ Altitude ……..
Environment: wet □ dry □	Interior doors: opened □ closed □	Rural environment □
Heating source: on □ off□ Cooling source: on □ off □	Windows : opened □ closed □	Open field □ wooded area □
Environment temperature: air temp.: ground temp.: water temp.:	Place: inhabited □ uninhabited □	Aquatic environment: see □ river □ lake □ water well□ canal □ beach □ rocky coast □ other □
Other:	Other:	Other:
Note:	Note:	Note:

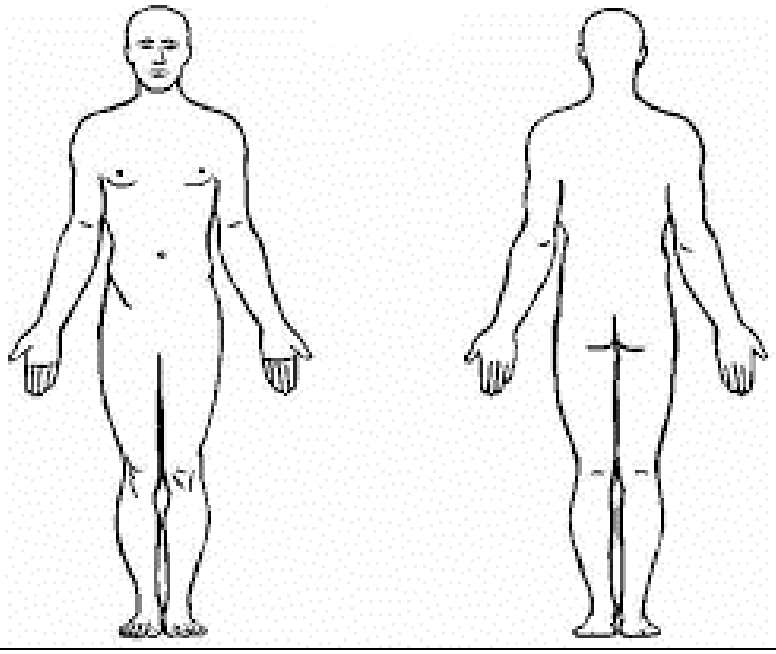
FEATURES OF THE CORPSE (*Complete by ticking the item found during the survey)*

Exposure	**Conservation**	**PMI related variables**
Running air □	Corpse: full □ parts □	Temperature: Body surface temp.: Head (ear) temp.: Rectal temp.: Ground/body interface temp.: Larval masses temp.:
Buried: complete □ partial □	Fresh □ skin colour: ……	
Naked □ Dressed □	Discoloration □	
Clothing: complete □ partial □	Gas distension □	
Clothes suited to the season: yes □ no □	Liquefaction □	
In the shade □ Exposed to the sun □	Skeletonization □ Maceration □ Saponification □ Mummification □ Corification □	**Rigor mortis:** - present/none: - site: - stiffness:
Wet □ Dry □	Other:	**Livor mortis:** - colour: - site: - fixation:
Note:	Note:	Note:

INJURIES

Complete highlighting on the figure the interested anatomical site using the references corresponding to the different injury types

Legend:
□ = abrasion
○ = bruise, contusion
◊ = laceration
X incised wound
---- cutmark
// = bone fracture
* = gunshot wound
*e = entrance
*u= exit



Notes and additional specific information:

GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPSE AND THE MAIN REFERENCE POINTS AT THE SCENE
(the photographic report of the corpse – biological traces included)

Photographic Report: yes □ no □
Sampling: no □ yes □ specify: _____
Other forms attached: no □ yes □ which: A □ O □ E □ G □ T □

_____, date _____ Name _____

_____

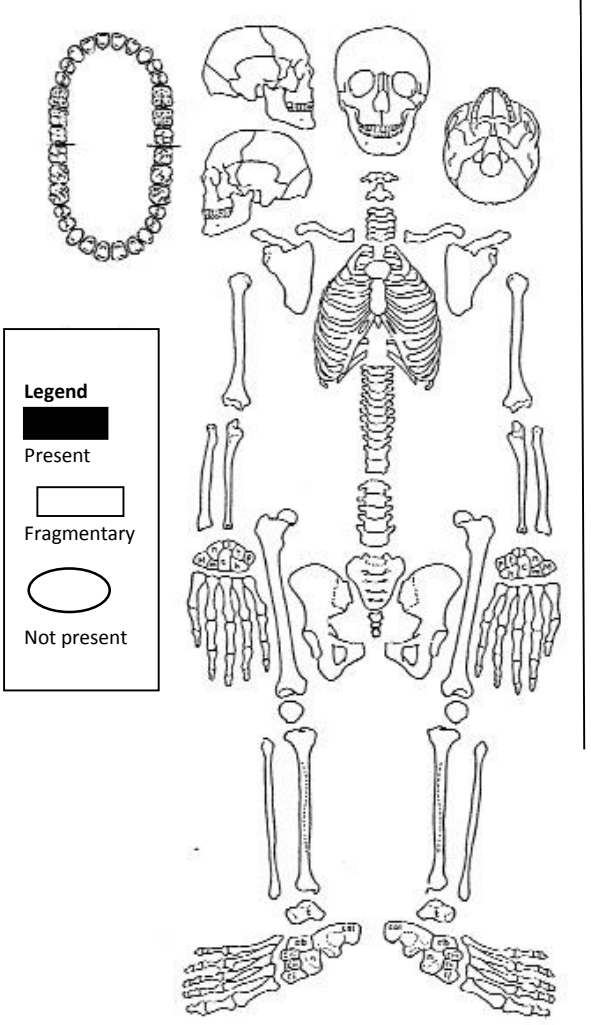
Signature and contact details

FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH
FORM FOR FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY

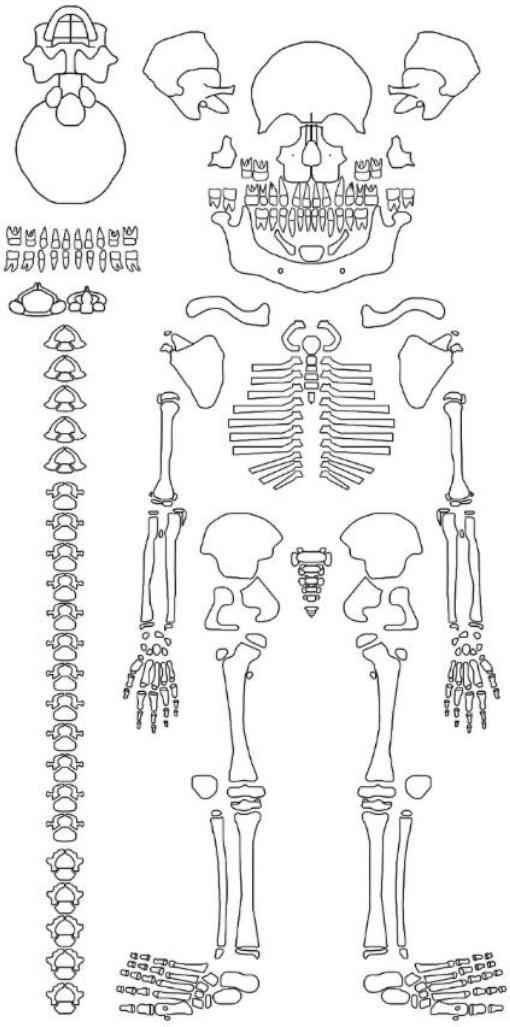
FOUND BONES

Circle the joint in anatomical connection and mark the elements found with X

ADULT



SUB-ADULT



Note: (bones missing)

_____

SAMPLING OF BONES

Sampled bones must be kept in unsealed plastic or paper bags signed with permanent ink specifying the following references:

Name/Surname/ANTHRO/Sequential number

** Complete by ticking the item found during the survey*

Sampled bones for each plastic bag *:
Removal of the segments one by one □ **Removal en bloc:** Skull □ Superior limb right □ left □ Chest (ribs, sternum, clavicles e scapula) □ Vertebral column □ Pelvic girdle (Pelvis right and left and sacrum) □ Inferior limb right □ left □
Note

Samples recovered (also for Entomology)	*	**Identity code Name/Surname/ANTRO/progressive number**
300 g ground in the area below the chest, abdomen or pelvis (when present)		
Botanical samples (roots, leaves over or under the human remains, when present)		
Note		

*

Complete by ticking the item found during the site inspection

Photographic documentation: yes □ no □

Other forms attached: no □ yes □ which: A □ O □ E □ G □ T □

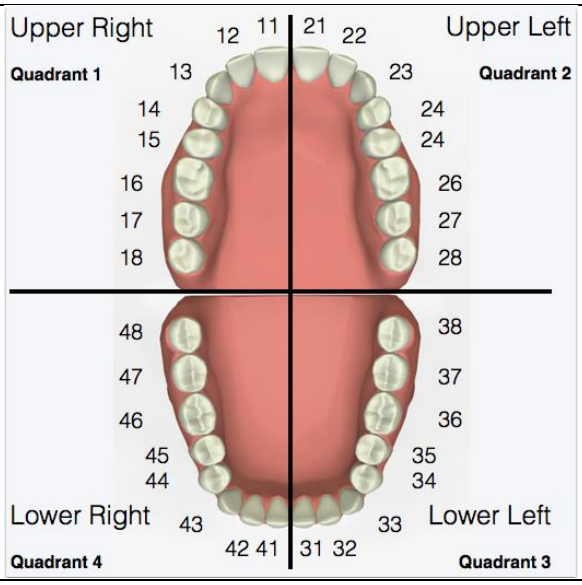
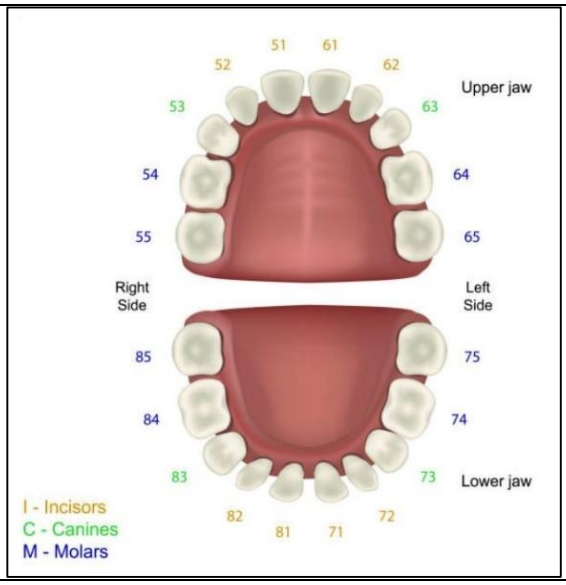
_____, date _____ Name_____

_____

Signature and contact details

FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH
FORM FOR FORENSIC ODONTOLOGY

DENTAL FORM IN SITU

FIGURE 1 – PERMANENT TEETH (> 6-8 years old)	FIGURE 2 – PRIMARY TEETH Only < 6-8 years old
	

ODONTOLOGICAL FINDINGS

No. of teeth individually recorded on the site**:** _____

No. of teeth removed from oral cavity (to avoid their loss during transport) _____

No. of prosthetic devices ☐ or orthodontic ☐ samples _____

Photographic report of dental arches: yes ☐ no ☐

Bite marks injury: ☐ salivary DNA samples of the perpetrator performed

☐ pictures taken

Note for forensic odontologist: _____

Other forms attached: no ☐ yes ☐ which: A ☐ O ☐ E ☐ G ☐ T ☐

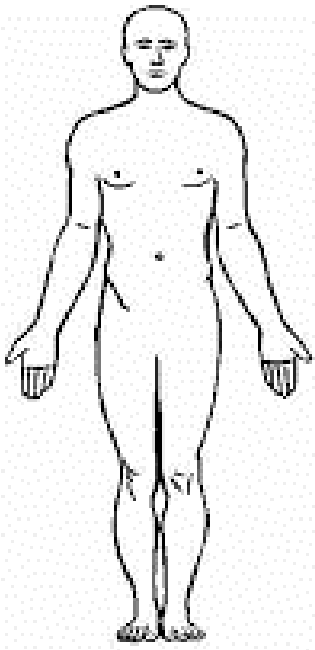
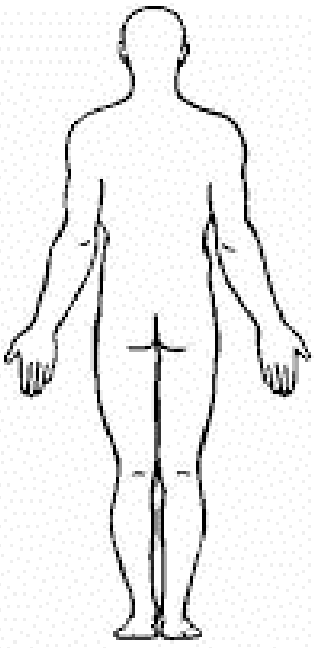
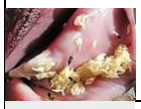
_____, date _____ Name_____

_____

Signature and contact details

FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH
FORM FOR FORENSIC ENTOMOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SAMPLE

Type		**Sign or symbol**	**Amount***	**site** **Complete by inserting on the human figure the sign or symbol corresponding to the type of entomological sample and the sequential number of the samples taken*
Diptera	 Adult flies	*		 
	 Eggs	X		
	 Larvae	0		
	 Pupae	^		
	 Puparia	☐		
Coleoptera	 Adult beetles	#		
	 Larvae	#1		
	 Exuviae	#2		
	 Pupae	#3		
***To quantify the entomological colonization use the following symbols:* **+** *sporadic specimens*; **++** *numerous specimens*; **+++** *abundant colonization*				

Collected sample (insert the corresponding signs)	**Site of the sampling** (indicate the number reported on the figure)	**Identity Code:** Name/Surname/ENTO/number of sampling indicated in the figure
Date and hour of sampling:		

Photographic documentation: yes ☐ no ☐
Other forms attached: no ☐ yes ☐ which: A ☐ O ☐ E ☐ G ☐ T ☐

_____, date _____ Name _____
_____
Signature and contact details

FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH
FORM FOR FORENSIC GENETISTS

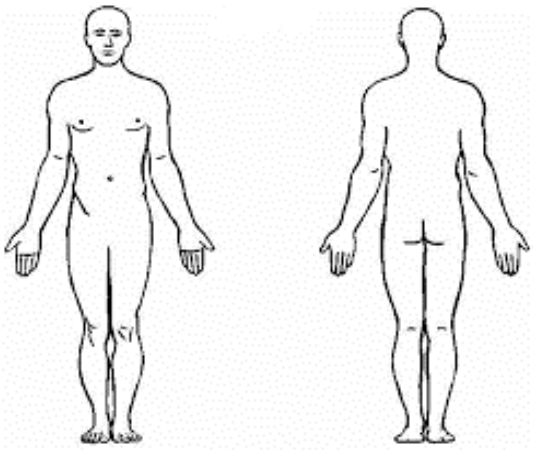
BIOLOGICAL TRACES IN THE ENVIRONMENT *(complete barring the detected item and indicate its location)*

Type and site of the suspected blood traces:
Splatter □ site:
Drops □ site:
Smudge □ site:
Drag marks □ site:
Pool □ site:
other biological traces:

BIOLOGICAL TRACES ON CORPSE

(complete inserting in the correct anatomical sites the sign corresponding to the biological traces as per legend, adding eventual notes in the provided space)

Legend:
Blood traces = x
Other traces= o
Hairs = □



Note: Perform sampling in a suitable environment. If necessary, make them on the site, following the indication for prevention of contamination sample/operator; sample/sample, environment/sample

Sampling: no □ (in this case it is mandatory to protect the hands of the corpse if a scratching action is alleged)
yes □ which:

□ skin swab on site of bite or grasping	□ vulvar swab	□ anal or perianal swab
□ oral swab	□ vaginal swab	□ scrapped subungual or nails cut at the free margin
□ perioral swab	□ cervical swab	□ complete nails (if the corpse is in the transformative phase)
□ penile swab	□ rectal swab	□ Hairs

Biological samples and recovered clothing must be kept in <u>paper bags</u> labelled with the following references: Name/Surname/GEN/anatomical site
Photographic documentation: yes □ no □
Other forms attached: no □ yes □ which: A □ O □ E □ G □ T □

_____, date _____ Name _____

_____
Signature and contact details

FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION AT THE SCENE OF DEATH
FORM FOR FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF TOXICOLOGICAL SAMPLES

Feedback on the place (photo report if possible)
Drugs and Medications:
Suspected substances (tablets, powders, liquids, etc.):
Alcoholic substances:
Drug paraphernalia (syringes, tourniquets, etc.):
Prescription of drugs and clinical documentation of interest for the case:
Suspicious smells/odours (if so, specify sources):
Possible sources of carbon monoxide (heaters, boilers, exhaust pipes, etc) or other gases:
Note:

Sampling: no □ yes □ n. samples: _____ type _____
Photographic report: yes □ no □
Other forms attached: no □ yes □ which: A □ O □ E □ G □ T □

_____, date_____ Name _____

_____
Signature and contact details

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Supplementary Material
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