World first forensic technique announced

February 24 2006

A team led by a University of Leicester forensic pathologist is believed to be the first in the world to use a new radiological approach for mass fatality investigation. Traditionally 2 types of radiology are used in mass fatality and temporary mortuary investigations -that of fluoroscopy and plain x-ray.

These techniques however are time consuming, yield limited information and are a health and safety hazard to those working in the environment due to the use of radiological equipment outside their normal working area. They are also not undertaken at the scene of the incident.

As far as we know, for the first time in the world a new radiological system was used recently at a mass fatality investigation. A team of researchers led by Professor Guy Rutty of the University of Leicester Forensic Pathology Unit used a mobile MSCT scanner at the mortuary for the examination of the victims of a vehicle mass fatality incident.

This instrument provided superior information in 2 dimensional plain film (AP and lateral) and 3 dimensional multi-slice examination with on-site soft tissue and bony reconstruction. The system proved faster then traditional temporary mortuary radiology yielding greater information related to identification, health and safety, autopsy planning and cause of death.

Professor Rutty said: "The demonstration of the ability to utilise mobile MSCT technology under these circumstances may result in a complete rethinking of the type of radiology to be used in temporary mortuaries or

mass fatalities scenes. The work presently being undertaken by my research team within the Forensic Pathology Unit at the University of Leicester in this area is hoped to develop new approaches to mass fatality radiological investigation which may be adopted throughout the world."

Source: University of Leicester