

HCIFS Anthropology Service
Receives International Accreditation

FIRST Anthropology Laboratory in nation to be accredited by
ANSI-ASQ NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (HCIFS) Forensic Anthropology Division is the first medical examiners' office in the United States to achieve accreditation under the ISO/IEC 17020 program. The ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) has granted accreditation to the Institute's Forensic Anthropology Division for a period of three years.

"Accreditation is a testament to the high standards and high caliber contribution that Forensic Anthropology makes to forensic death investigation in Harris County," said **Luis A. Sanchez, M.D., HCIFS executive director and chief medical examiner.** "The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences is one of a very few medical examiner offices in the country with a fully integrated Anthropology Division, and now we are the only one in the nation to be accredited by this international program."

In 2006, the Institute established its Forensic Anthropology Division and their role in Harris County medical examiner cases. While most individuals are familiar with anthropology's value in analyzing unknown skeletal remains, the Institute's anthropologists and medical examiner work in tandem on cases that require scientific analysis of skeletal fracture patterns and bony injuries during autopsy examinations of trauma deaths. In addition, the Institute is one of only a couple medical examiner offices in the country to train doctorate-level anthropologists in forensic anthropological investigation.

"Anthropologists work alongside forensic pathologists as an integral part of a team of experts dedicated to analysis of cause, manner and mechanism of death in a variety of cases, such as accidental deaths, suicides and homicides, especially fatal child abuse," said

Dwayne A. Wolf, M.D., HCIFS deputy chief medical examiner. "As this role has developed, we have come to appreciate anthropologists' dedication to scientific principles and objectivity. It's not surprising that this dedication has now been formally recognized by the accrediting board."

HCIFS accreditation was granted following a two-day inspection of more than 300 requirements, including the academic qualifications and training of the staff, appropriateness of specimen handling and examination procedures, facility safety and security, and the overall quality assurance program.

"Accreditation is a significant achievement for the Institute's Forensic Anthropology Division, and it marks a watershed moment in the history of Forensic Anthropology," said **Christian Crowder, Ph.D., HCIFS director of Forensic Anthropology.**

The goal of the ANAB accreditation program is to enhance and maintain standards of technical competence and practices, in addition to good quality management practices for forensic examination. The hallmark of accreditation is that the laboratory met all standards.

"Forensic Anthropology has made leaps and bounds in the medicolegal field over the past few decades, ultimately establishing itself as an integral part of medical examiner/coroner operations. The formal recognition of forensic anthropology by an accreditation body is a milestone in the continual development of this field," added **Douglas Ubelaker, Ph.D., curator and senior scientist** at the **Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.**



Luis A. Sanchez, M.D.
HCIFS Executive Director,
Chief Medical Examiner

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HCIFS Deputy Chief
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Curator and Senior Scientist,
Smithsonian Institution's
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ABOUT THE HARRIS COUNTY INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES:

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences, an independent, science-based organization, provides two distinct forensic services for the Harris County community – the Medical Examiner Service and the Crime Laboratory Service. The Forensic Anthropology Division is one of many disciplines within the Institute's Medical Examiner Service and performs analytical services to support Harris County medical examiners, and county and regional law enforcement agencies. To learn more about the Institute of Forensic Sciences or its Forensic Anthropology Division, visit: www.harriscountytexas.gov/ifs.