



Milwaukee County

DATE: 10.4.2018

TO: Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dr. Brian Peterson, Chief Medical Examiner; and, Christine Westrich, Director, Office of Emergency Management

SUBJECT: The Chief Medical Examiner and the Director of the Office of Emergency Management provide information on growing relocation needs and simultaneous benefits of colocation with the Medical College of Wisconsin and others in a Center for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine

There are publications today that have documented the failing infrastructure of both the Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) home bases, the MEO at 10th and Highland and OEM in the Safety Building at 9th and State. The Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) states that the locations "should be fully replaced as soon as possible."¹

Let's look forward—onto good news. For over 40 years, the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) and Milwaukee County have partnered a sustainable, mutually beneficial relationship that has enhanced our region's studies in pathology and emergency medicine. Recently, MCW invited the County to join in the construction of a new Center for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine facility that co-locates essential medical, safety, and research services. Such housing of both a high-tech curriculum and a real-time operations center creates a pipeline for forensic specialists and telecommunicators in advanced training, modern criminal justice investigations and coordinated emergency response.

OEM research with the MCW in the field of Emergency Medicine can be expanded to include fellows and residents in Pathology; likewise, the reverse is true with emergency physicians expanding into forensic studies. This academic exchange will result in cross-functional advantages, yet another unexplored benefit in this collaborative model.

Additional partnerships include laboratory tenants such as the Wisconsin Tissue Bank, MATC Funeral Science Program and the Poison Control Center. Not only are enhanced services provided to the community, but a competitive advantage would be ignited within the state, attracting motivated students, academicians, and other talent. It is reasonable to expect additional grant monies for such a consortium of experts.

Back to bad news—the opioid epidemic. Here, there is clear evidence of the need for optimal communications and data sharing between the MEO and OEM. Though too late for those fatal

¹ Wisconsin Policy Forum: *Cracks in the Foundation*. Retrieved on October 4th, 2018.
<https://wispolicyforum.org/research/cracks-in-the-foundation/>

overdoses, the MEO data informs response and treatment measures on the part of OEM and countywide emergency medical services. Co-location avoids perceived geo-barriers and furthers partnerships with opiate experts and emergency medicine personnel.


Annually, the OEM 9-1-1 receives 273,000 calls for help, OEM-educated paramedics transport over 560,000 patients to local hospitals, and the MEO investigates over 7,000 deaths. This sequence—emergency response, emergency medicine, and post-emergency—will undoubtedly see measurable benefits from a dedicated hub of learning focused on the cycle of life.

There are additional opportunities that need further exploration countywide. For example, the DHHS Behavioral Health Division is investigating of "Air Traffic Control" methodology, a technique currently implemented in OEM's paramedic communications center. Real-time performance dashboards of patient tracking and bed inventories is a shared goal.

Here, we find evidence of cross-functional efficiencies within Milwaukee County; the pursuit of combining various 24/7 operations center with after-hours operations of additional County departments will availability will save countless taxpayer dollars.

Today, stigmas associated with emergency services, mental illness and the ultimate certainty of death are known to be detrimental to society, rather these are all components of our earthly existence that will reap great benefit when academic researchers and first responders are exposed to collaborative coordination of patient care, up to, and possibly including autopsy conclusions that can change processes *pre-death*, potentially resulting in life-saving changes.

In conclusion, we have a rare and "potentially ground-breaking opportunity" to shift the landscape towards modernity in southeastern Wisconsin.² We respectfully submit this paper as representation of our joint vision on the Center for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine. It is clear to us that the benefits far outweigh the alternatives and presents local policymakers with the opportunity to exhibit fiscal stewardship in seizing economic efficiencies, while also launching Milwaukee County as a leader of forensics and emergency medicine.



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² Wisconsin Policy Forum: Breaking New Ground. Retrieved on October 4th, 2018.
<https://wispolicyforum.org/research/cracks-in-the-foundation/>