

# Health Care: A Career For Life

## FORENSIC SCIENCE

### WHAT IS FORENSIC SCIENCE

Forensic science is the application of science to law. Any science can be applied into a legal situation, but some of the commonest forensic sciences include forensic biology, forensic chemistry, and forensic toxicology. The word forensic in today's world simply means the application of something to a legal situation.

Therefore, on its own, the word forensic means very little. When used in the term "forensic science" it means applying a SCIENCE into a legal setting. The important word here is SCIENCE.

Therefore, you CANNOT be a forensic scientist without first being a scientist, and a very good and well educated scientist as you will not only be analyzing and interpreting evidence which could be responsible for setting a person free or imprisoning them for life, but also you will and should be challenged to the utmost during cross-examination in court. Therefore, the science must come first. If you wish to be, for instance, a forensic chemist, you must be a top of the line chemist first. Then you will be trained to apply your knowledge of chemistry into a legal setting. In most cases, forensic science is little different from other branches of science. We just use our expertise to help solve crimes.

### SECTIONS OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

- Anthropology – Medical
- Anthropology – Odontology
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Documents
- Engineering
- Firearms
- General
- Toxicology

Although on television we see supposed 'forensic scientists' doing a multitude of jobs from crime scene analysis to shooting the bad guy, forensic science in real life is quite different. Television and fictional books suggest that one person is frequently an expert in many aspects of science. In reality, each area is a distinct specialty with many years of education and training required before a person can enter the field. If television heroes really had all the education required to be an expert in several fields, they would be well into their eighties before they even began their career.

### CAREER OPTIONS

There are several career options in the area of forensic science. Some of these positions are only available to sworn police officers, but many others are open to civilians. Many positions are full-time, while others are consultant positions. Forensic science careers exist in several areas including:

- **The Forensic Lab.** There are many crime labs or forensic laboratories across Canada which employ civilian scientists to analyze evidence recovered from a crime scene.
- **Crime Scene Investigation.** Crime scenes are analyzed by police officers in Canada, not civilians. These officers are highly trained and specialized Identification officers whose sole duty is to investigate and process crime scenes.
- **Death Scenes in general.** Death scenes, with few exceptions, are attended by Coroners, Medical Examiners, or their trained death investigators, depending on Province. These people are civilians

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and work for their individual province, acting as an ombudsperson for the dead. If the death is suspicion

- **Forensic Pathology.** Forensic pathologists are specialized medical doctors who analyze the body, performing autopsies and determining such factors as cause of death.
- **Other Forensic Specialists.** There are many other forensic specialists including forensic anthropologists, entomologists, odontologists, engineers, botanists, artists, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, profilers and wildlife specialists, to name just a few.

*The above is intended to describe some of the more common forensic positions.*

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## **THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF FORENSIC SCIENCE**

The Canadian Society of Forensic Science (CSFS) is a non-profit professional organization incorporated to maintain professional standards, and to promote the study and enhance the stature of forensic science. Membership in the society is open internationally to professionals with an active interest in the forensic sciences. It is organized into sections representing diverse areas of forensic examination: Anthropology, Medical, Odontology, Biology, Chemistry, Documents, Engineering, Firearms and Toxicology.

Forensic scientists are routinely involved in investigations of crimes against persons and property, such as homicides, assaults, arson, impaired driving and fraud. Forensic scientists also appear regularly in criminal and civil proceedings and coroner's inquests to give opinion evidence relating to forensic examinations. Special committees of the CSFS address educational, scientific, and legal issues within forensic science and act as advisory bodies to provincial and federal justice ministries.

<http://www.csfs.ca/>

## **LINKS**

Canadian Society of Forensic Science

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