

## The Role of Forensic Surgery in Legal Investigations

**Dr. Mayur Nagvekar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Soumya Shrivastava<sup>2</sup>, Dr. M.B. Bagwan<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Vijay V. Kanase<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Mahesh Sharma**

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of Surgery, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth “Deemed to be University”, Taluka-Karad, Dist-Satara, Pin-415 539, Maharashtra, India,

Email ID: [managvekar@gmail.com](mailto:managvekar@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Law School, Nagpur campus, Symbiosis International (Deemed University) Pune, India,

Email ID: [soumyasrivastava@slnagpur.edu.in](mailto:soumyasrivastava@slnagpur.edu.in)

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of Surgery, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth “Deemed to be University”, Taluka-Karad, Dist-Satara, Pin-415 539, Maharashtra, India,

Email ID: [rafiquemrb@yahoo.com](mailto:rafiquemrb@yahoo.com)

<sup>4</sup>Professor & Head, Dept. of Surgery, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth “Deemed to be University”, Taluka-Karad, Dist-Satara, Pin-415 539, Maharashtra, India,

Email ID: [vijaykanase@yahoo.com](mailto:vijaykanase@yahoo.com)

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Arya College of Pharmacy, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Email ID: [maheshsharma@aryacollege.org](mailto:maheshsharma@aryacollege.org)

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### ABSTRACT

Forensic surgery is particularly crucial for medical professionals working in legal investigations as it clarifies injuries, fatalities, and other medical evidence in criminal cases. Part of this discipline involves using surgical skills, medical expertise, and understanding of the human body to determine what caused an accident, how serious it is, and what could have occurred before to it. Forensic physicians closely assist attorneys including police, judges, and defence lawyers to ensure that medical evidence is correctly interpreted and presented while investigations are in progress and in court. The forensic surgeon's expertise is very crucial when there is murder, assault, or sexual abuse because determining the reason and technique of injury will enable others to know what occurred. Often helping to determine the cause of a death and whether it was criminal, accidental, or natural, forensic physicians are They not only consider physical evidence but also engage in Their outcomes may significantly influence court case outcomes, therefore influencing decisions about charges, sentencing, and criminal investigations. The value of forensic surgeons both during investigations and in court is discussed in this article along with how forensic surgery might be used in legal investigations. It also demonstrates how forensic surgery is evolving as physicians and attorneys collaborate more and new technology and techniques are used. Forensic surgery is a crucial component of maintaining the law fair and ensuring that legal processes are honest in a society where criminal investigations must be accurate and exact.

**Keywords:** Forensic Surgery, Legal Investigations, Criminal Justice, Post-Mortem, Medical Evidence, Trauma Analysis

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Among all the disciplines of medicine and law, forensic surgery is the one that closes the knowledge gap between medical expertise and legal enquiries. Particularly in cases of violent crimes like murder, assault, or sexual offences, this sector is quite crucial for criminal investigations. Forensic physicians have to meticulously examine scars and bruises, conduct tests, and determine why someone died as part of their employment. Their findings are often rather crucial for determining if a crime has been committed, what kind of crime it was, and who did it. Using their expertise of human anatomy, surgical techniques, and medical science, forensic surgeons compile crucial evidence that supports the court case that follows [1]. More than just legal investigations prove—that injuries have occurred—forensic surgery is used in other spheres. It also clarifies when, what sort of injuries, and why they occurred as well as distinguishes natural from accidental from criminal

causes of death. During post-mortem investigations, when they must meticulously examine the corpse to determine if violence, drugs, or another medical condition caused the death, forensic surgeons are extremely crucial. Finding a definite cause of death from a thorough study into unusual fatalities is crucial for forensic physicians to ensure the event is correctly categorised legally. When a forensic surgeon examines someone in a forensic laboratory or on a crime scene, they must be able to put the events together using physical evidence. The correctness and success of the research depend on this very highly.

In court proceedings, forensic surgeons are also often called expert witnesses as their findings and testimony may significantly affect the outcome of trials. Judges and juries must be able to clearly, succinctly, and easily grasp complex medical facts provided by forensic experts. Their data often clarifies the likely objectives, the actions leading to the crime, and the possible causes of certain injuries. Strong evidence linking a suspect to a crime, refutation or support for defence attorneys' assertions, and assistance in narrowing the list of potential suspects may all be found via forensic surgical analysis [2]. Forensic surgery has evolved much as medical technology and techniques have advanced. Forensic estimations have been more accurate because to the use of imaging technologies such as CT scans and MRIs as well as advances in more sophisticated techniques of tissue analysis. These technological developments enable forensic physicians to examine injuries more attentively, therefore providing attorneys with more thorough and strong evidence in their cases. Moreover, the cooperation of forensic physicians, law enforcement, and attorneys has become much more important. From gathering actual evidence to determining what it means and presenting it in court, this approach combines individuals from several disciplines to ensure that every aspect of the research is carried out. Because it provides physicians with vital medical information that clarifies crimes and guarantees justice is done, forensic surgery is a significant component of criminal investigations. Forensic physicians not only assist with the criminal justice system overall but also help determine how individuals die as they provide complete, scientific evidence. Forensic surgery is a vital component of discovering the truth and doing what's right; it continues improving by using what physicians and solicitors know together.

## 2. RELATED WORK

Forensic science is a branch of research and application where forensic surgery has proven very significant. Many research and developments over years have proved the significance in criminal cases. Early developments in the discipline set the path for the use of forensic surgical ideas in criminal justice today. Sir William S. Hunter conducted one of the earliest investigations on forensic pathology in the 1800s, particularly with reference to post-mortem testing. He underlined the need of tests in criminal proceedings. The field has evolved much since then. Additional new medical technologies and forensic techniques have been included, hence improving the accuracy and dependability of forensic surgery [3]. An significant field of study in forensic surgery has been trauma and its relationship to illicit behaviour. Research on many types of injuries—including bullet cuts, hard force damage, and injuries from sharp objects—have found significant information regarding the nature of a crime based on their respective characteristics. Studies have shown, for example, that the specifics of a gunshot wound—such as where the bullet entered and left the body and its path—can assist investigators piece together what transpired that tragedy and provide highly significant information [4]. For legal investigations, researchers have also investigated how forensic surgery could assist in determining the cause of fatal injuries including poison, direct force trauma, and asphyxia [5]. Apart from considering physical harm, forensic experts are rather crucial when investigating sexual offences as medical evidence may support or refute allegations. In situations of sexual attacks, when DNA evidence and patterns of injuries help to determine the kind of crime committed and who perpetrated it, many studies have investigated the significance of forensic testing [6]. Forensic surgery and the outcomes of instances involving sexual assault in the court system are closely related. This is so because supporting legal decisions, like trusting victims' testimonies and prosecuting offenders, forensic evidence is often employed [7].

Forensic surgery has evolved thanks in great part to medical imaging technology such as CT scans and MRIs. Forensic physicians now view trauma and accidents using these technology. These technologies have enabled physicians to record and evaluate injuries more accurately by allowing them to inspect individuals without causing harm. Using these imaging technologies in conjunction with conventional approaches after a death provides a more complete picture of how injuries occurred, which helps forensic analysis to be more accurate and trustworthy [8, 9]. Forensic experts may now create exact models of injuries and crime scenes using 3D imaging technology. This clarifies difficult instances for researchers and solicitors so they may present evidence before courts [10]. Forensic surgery has also expanded in scope as need for expert testimony in court proceedings increases. In criminal proceedings, forensic surgeons are often called expert witnesses. Their medical expertise will enable jurors and judges to interpret the evidence and sort out complex case developments. Particularly in cases where the cause of death is unknown or contentious, studies have shown that the testimony of forensic surgeons may significantly influence the outcome of criminal proceedings [11]. Legal experts have discussed the need of forensic physicians testifying so that medical evidence is accurately interpreted in a legal environment and the protection of rights of defendants and victims during trials [12].

Research on ways to mix forensic surgery with other forensic disciplines such forensic chemistry, odontology, and anthropology has been more abundant in the last several years. Particularly when many kinds of evidence are required to

support or refute various theories about a crime, this approach from several spheres has proven very beneficial in handling challenging situations. For instance, forensic physicians and scientists cooperate to identify the individual and explain their death when a corpse has been severely degraded or sliced up [13]. Collaborating with individuals from many backgrounds guarantees that criminal investigations consider the complete picture, which is preferable for rendering legal choices [14, 15]. Over the years, forensic surgery has evolved significantly; fresh research is in progress to enhance it and identify fresh applications in criminal cases. Forensic surgery is still a vital component of the criminal justice system even if forensic technology is always improving and court operations alter. It provides physicians with vital medical knowledge that aids in the search for truth and obtaining of justice [16].

### 3. FORENSIC SURGERY IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

#### A. Role of Forensic Surgeons in Violent Crime Investigations (Homicides, Assaults, etc.)

Particularly in situations of murders, assaults, and other types of physical violence, forensic surgeons are very important in violent crime investigations. Their knowledge of trauma analysis helps them to give vital insights on the kind and degree of the injuries, hence they are often assigned to provide the first medical evaluations on victims. Forensic surgeons look for evidence of damage—including abrasions, lacerations, gunshot wounds, and fractures—in murder cases to help to determine the mechanism of injury and the circumstances behind death. Regarding assault, they record internal wounds, cuts, and bruises that may not be immediately obvious. The results of the forensic surgeon may assist to define the circumstances of the assault, pinpoint possible culprits, and create timelines. Many times, the evidence and study of injury trends assist in deciding whether the injuries were caused in self-defence or with intention. By gathering biological evidence including blood samples, hair, or body fluids—which may then be utilised in the identification of the offender— forensic surgeons may also help law enforcement with crime scene investigations. Beyond the first inspection, the surgeon's function is typically that of expert witness in court, elucidating the nature of the injuries and their significance for the case.

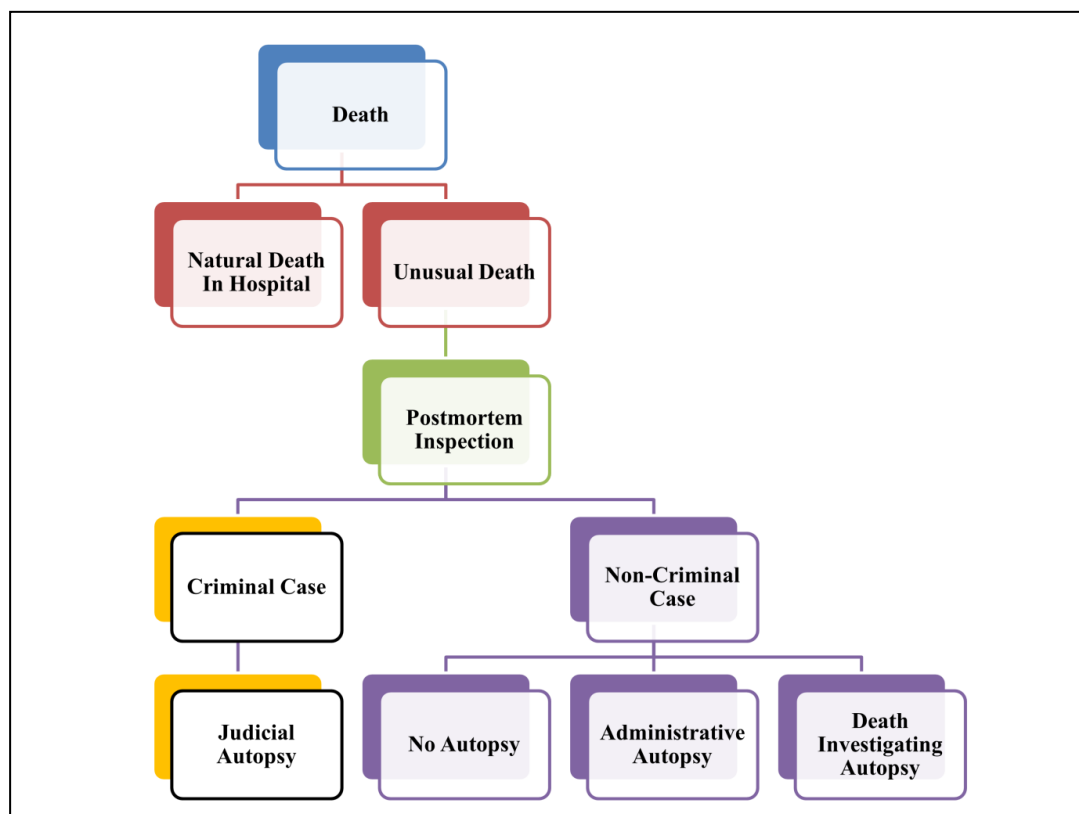


Figure 1: Classification of Death and Types of Postmortem Inspections

#### B. Post-Mortem Examinations: Identifying Cause and Manner of Death

Essential component of forensic medicine, post-mortem investigations help to determine the cause of death in criminal investigations. Forensic physicians examine and document the state of the corpse during an autopsy in order to identify any evidence of injury, disease, or a peculiar cause of death. The cause of death is the disease or injury—such as asphyxiation, hard force trauma, or trauma from a bullet wound—that immediately resulted in death. Conversely, the manner someone passes away indicates if the death was suicide, accident, natural, or murder. By examining the pattern of damage, the presence

of harmful medicines, and other medical issues that could have contributed to the death, investigators are quite excellent in separating these groups. Shooting wounds, for example, might indicate murder, but forensic experts also have to consider other factors, such as the victim's medical background or the existence of illnesses she previously had that would have killed her. More tests like histology, drug records, microscope analysis, and histopathology assist to uncover the truth as the death process is not usually obvious. Apart from determining if a crime had place, these post-mortem enquiries provide priceless evidence for the criminal justice system to either condemn or release innocent persons.

### ***C. Analysis of Trauma and Injury Patterns***

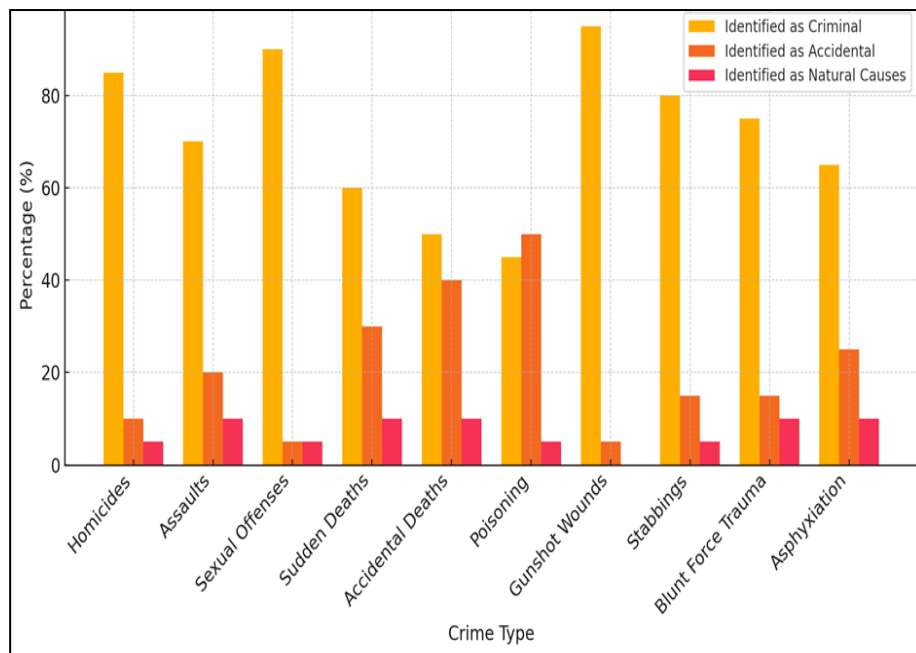
Especially in investigations on violent crime, forensic surgery depends critically on the study of trauma and damage patterns. Examining the kind, degree, and form of injuries on the body, forensic surgeons help to determine how the violence happened and what kind of weapon or force was employed. Different kinds of injuries—such as gunshot wounds, blunt force trauma, sharp force trauma (e.g., stabbings), and blunt force trauma—leave unique patterns that might enable forensic surgeons to put the circumstances surrounding a murder together. For instance, although sharp force injuries usually imply the use of knives or other cutting tools, blunt force injuries—such as bruises and contusions—usually correlate with strikes from things like fists or blunt tools. Gunshot wounds create a special set of difficulties as the trajectory of the bullet, entrance and exit wounds, and the presence of gunpowder residue all give vital hints regarding the location of the victim and the gunman. Apart from physical trauma, forensic surgeons examine interior injuries like damage to organs or blood vessels that may not be immediately evident but are vital in determining the degree of the assault and the time of death. Through the identification of damage patterns, forensic surgeons assist law enforcement authorities to create a better picture of the circumstances before the crime, therefore facilitating the identification of suspects and knowledge of the attack's motivation.

### ***D. Techniques Used in Forensic Surgery to Assess Injuries (e.g., Surgical Methods, Autopsies)***

In many different methods, forensic surgery examines mishaps and provides precise findings for criminal cases. During the autopsy, forensic physicians meticulously examine the corpse to note any injuries, trauma, or underlying diseases. Most often used and crucial operation is this one. Cutting open the body, the internal inspection looks at the innards, blood vessels, and internal damages. Conversely, the autopsy searches for both internal and external gunshot wounds as well as cuts, bruises, and burns. To determine the extent of the injury and gather microscopic data sometimes invisible to the unaided eye, forensic physicians also use certain surgical methods like dissection and tissue analysis. Forensic experts may examine fractures, haemorrhages, or foreign objects within the body using X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs in trauma cases. This clarifies for them the injuries. Forensic physicians may employ digital photos or 3D models to examine and clearly depict damage patterns when things are challenging or while getting ready evidence for court. To provide a complete and precise evaluation of injuries, forensic physicians combine modern technologies with conventional surgical techniques. Legal actions depend on this. These techniques provide dependable, scientifically sound, legally sufficient medical findings fit for use in court.

**Table 2: Forensic Surgery Analysis Results**

<b>Crime Type</b>	<b>Total Cases Analyzed</b>	<b>Percentage Identified as Criminal</b>	<b>Percentage Identified as Accidental</b>	<b>Percentage Identified as Natural Causes</b>
Homicides	120	85	10	5
Assaults	90	70	20	10
Sexual Offenses	80	90	5	5
Sudden Deaths	70	60	30	10
Accidental Deaths	60	50	40	10
Poisoning	50	45	50	5
Gunshot Wounds	110	95	5	0
Stabbings	100	80	15	5
Blunt Force Trauma	130	75	15	10
Asphyxiation	65	65	25	10



**Figure 2: Distribution Of Crime Type Classifications**

#### 4. FORENSIC SURGERY IN SPECIFIC CRIMINAL CASES

##### ***A. Homicides: Understanding Blunt Force Trauma, Sharp Force Injuries, Gunshot Wounds, etc.***

Investigating homicides calls for forensic surgery, particularly in order to determine the kind of harm the victim sustained. Common kinds of injuries in murder cases include blunt force trauma, sharp force injuries, and bullet wounds. Every kind provides distinct details on the kind of assault. Typical blunt force trauma consists of cuts, scratches, and shattered bones. It may occur in a vehicle accident, falls, or upon someone making a major hit. Forensic physicians look closely to determine the direction, degree, and likely instrument employed in these injuries. Those with cuts, stab wounds, or other sharp force injuries often claim knives or other sharp objects were used. The weapon used, the attacker's strategy, and the victim's whereabouts at assault may all be deduced from the size, round, and depth of the cut. In murder cases, another crucial kind of injury are gunshot wounds. Examining the course of the bullet, the entry and exit holes, and any damage to the organs inside the body, forensic physicians may find the culprit and determining when the crime occurred depend much on forensic physicians helping to put together what transpired before the murder by closely examining these injuries.

##### ***B. Sexual Offenses: Role of Forensic Surgeons in Examining Sexual Assault Cases***

Regarding sexual offences, forensic physicians are very important. Their duty is not just to ensure no injuries exist. Forensic physicians thoroughly investigate accusations of sexual abuse to identify DNA, sperm, and other bodily fluids that might link the abuser to the crime. They also search for any indications of genital region injury, including cuts, bruises, or other injuries possibly resulting from the incident. These forms of bruises would reveal the degree of violence used in the assault, therefore assisting in the crime's solving. To assist them distinguish between fresh and old injuries, forensic physicians often review the medical history and any indicators of a former assault of the victim. To enable DNA evidence to be discovered, forensic investigators gather forensic samples like hair, skin cells, toenail scrapings. Since it links a suspect to the crime and supports what the victim said about the attack, this evidence is quite crucial. Enquiries into sexual offences benefit much from the very valuable contribution of forensic physicians. Their expertise guarantees proper collection and storage of the medical evidence for court uses, therefore supporting the quest of justice.

##### ***C. Sudden or Suspicious Deaths: Differentiating Between Natural, Accidental, and Criminal Causes of Death***

Trained to investigate sudden or unusual deaths, forensic physicians must often meticulously investigate to see if the death was natural, accidental, or resulting from a crime. If more evidence points to a sudden death from a heart attack, stroke, or drug overdose being caused by murder, then sometimes they seem like that. Under these circumstances, forensic physicians examine the corpse to identify the cause of death. Particularly in cases of poisoning or overdosing, it may be difficult to distinguish natural fatalities from deaths resulting from medications or poisons. Examining the organs, cells, and tissues of the deceased individual, forensic professionals search for any toxins or medical disorders likely to have caused the death. Like fatalities from falls, automobile accidents, or drownings, accidental deaths also need close investigation to ensure no foul play occurred. Researchers hunt for trends in injuries that fit the circumstances of the event—such as direct force injuries



from an automobile or fractured bones from a fall. Forensic physicians closely search for these sorts of indicators to either support or refute the theory of murder if the death is believed to have been caused by trauma or violence—like gunshot wounds, knife wounds, or hard force injuries. These many causes of death must be distinguishable for forensic professionals so that the correct legal categorisation may be assigned. This effects the case as well as the research. Through meticulous investigation, forensic physicians provide crucial hints that enable the actual cause of death to be determined and ensure the application of justice.

## 5. THE ROLE OF FORENSIC SURGEONS AS EXPERT WITNESSES

### A. Contribution of Forensic Surgeons to Legal Proceedings

Forensic doctors play a big role in the court system because they give the judge professional advice that helps them understand difficult medical problems. Especially when there have been big crimes, they are often asked to explain how certain cuts or injuries could have happened and give their view on how the person died. Forensic doctors can not only give information, but they can also properly look over medical records, which could be very useful in a trial or study. They help us understand what cuts mean, like how different types of wounds may point to a certain weapon or way of attacking. As forensic doctors help to clear up the case, they give details about any underlying medical problems that might have led to the victim's injuries or death. Forensic doctors look at autopsies, test results, and other medical records to help connect what the court decides with what doctors know. This makes sure that the court has correct, scientifically-based information at its disposal to make smart choices.

### B. Medical Findings in Court: Challenges and Responsibilities

Forensic physicians face several challenges when they testify in court displaying their medical findings. One of the most important is clearly translating difficult medical jargon and concepts into language that attorneys, juries, and judges could grasp. Presenting findings in an exact and straightforward manner is rather crucial as the interpretation of the forensic evidence could determine the legal conclusion of a case. Forensic surgeons should make sure their evidence is comprehensible to anyone not in the medical field and avoid using medical jargon. Another challenging thing is to be objective and unbiased. Regardless of who hired them, forensic physicians have to provide fair, fact-based evidence as they are competent witnesses. They should remain focused on the scientific evidence and avoid opinion, guessing, and prejudice. Forensic physicians may also be cross-examined, so the attorneys representing the opposing side will want to challenge the validity of their findings or qualifications. In these circumstances, forensic physicians must be able to boldly and clearly state their techniques, findings, and opinions so that their evidence is taken under belief and utilised in court.

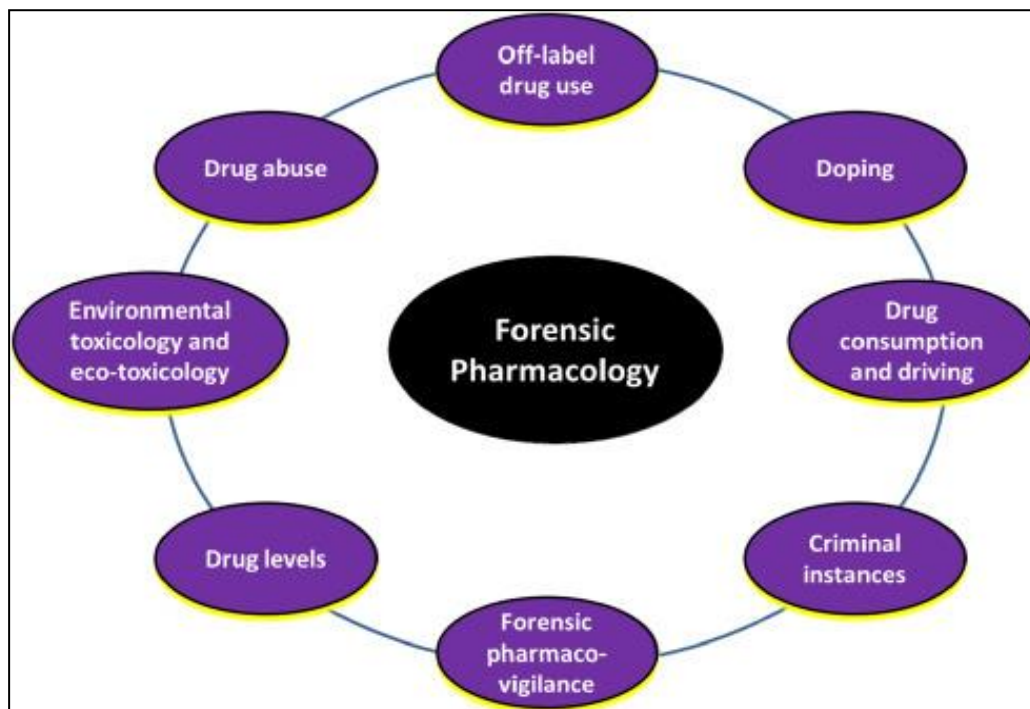


Figure 3: Representation of Medical Forensic key factor in analysis

### ***C. Impact of Forensic Surgeons' Testimony on Legal Outcomes***

Since forensic physicians approach a court case from a medical perspective, their evidence may significantly influence the outcome of the case. Their testimony may be rather crucial in criminal investigations determining if a death resulted from murder, an accident, or something natural. Often during murder investigations, forensic physicians provide crucial information supporting the defendants' guilt. These particulars include the kind of weapon used, the death time, and the method of victim killing. Their proof may also influence the sentence or the seriousness of the charges applied. For instance, the victim can be guilty of murder if the forensic surgeon shows that their injuries were created with intent. Should the injuries result from error, nevertheless, the individual could be accused of a lesser felony. The capacity of forensic physicians to eloquently and effectively present their findings may influence the jury's view of the evidence, therefore influencing both the prosecution and the defence strategies. Strong forensic evidence has sometimes been a major determinant of whether someone is found not guilty or convicted, therefore highlighting the relevance of forensic information in producing judicial outcomes.

## **6. FORENSIC SURGERY IN LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

### ***A. Legal Implications of Forensic Surgical Findings***

Findings from forensic surgery have big legal effects because they are often used as the basis for illegal investigations and court cases. Forensic surgery results mostly have legal implications because they can show what caused death or harm and how it happened, which can change whether the case is classified as natural, accidental, suicide, or murderous. For instance, forensic doctors' reports of injuries or toxins can help tell the difference between an accident death and a murder. Most of the time, these results provide important proof that either supports or contradicts what suspects, witnesses, or defence lawyers say. Also, forensic surgery evidence could be very important in proving alibis or statements, which could affect the validity of the case for either the government or the prisoner. Forensic doctors may be able to tell a lot about a person's guilt or innocence by looking at patterns of damage, the type of tool used, and the level of stress they have experienced in cases of serious crimes like murder or sexual attack. Also, the results of forensic surgery can be very important in cases after a person has been convicted; they can either confirm the sentence or prove that the person was not guilty. Forensic surgery results have to be completely accurate and reliable because any mistake in the analysis can put the justice system at risk.

### ***B. How Forensic Surgery Influences the Legal Process and Criminal Justice***

The legal system and criminal justice system are greatly affected by forensic surgery because it gives doctors important medical information that helps them figure out what happened in crimes. As part of criminal investigations, forensic doctors are asked to look at victims of violent crimes, write down any injuries they find, and figure out whether the injuries were caused on purpose or by accident. Their results help police sort leads, narrow down the list of possible suspects, and plan their next steps in the case. Forensic surgery is often a key part of choosing whether a case goes to trial or charges are brought, since medical proof can support or refute the illegal charges against a person. As the case goes on, forensic doctors help judges and juries understand complicated medical language and harm patterns by analysing medical data. Their information could be a key link between the medical results and the legal claims made by both the prosecution and the defence. Aside from the courts, forensic surgery has an effect on the criminal justice system because it affects sentence choices, especially when serious crimes are involved. Also, forensic surgery has changed the laws and rules that govern how private medical records are handled, forensic evidence is put together, and autopsies are done. So, forensic surgery is not only necessary for crime cases, it also plays a big role in making sure that the justice system works.

### ***C. Key Challenges in Applying Forensic Evidence in Legal Contexts***

Forensic proof used in court cases comes with a lot of problems, especially when it comes to medical results and how they should be interpreted, admitted, and trusted. One of the hardest things is having the chance to disagree with skilled views. As expert witnesses, forensic surgeons may give different testimony than other medical experts. This can lead to different opinions on what caused the death or harm and how it happened. This could make the judges doubtful and make the legal process more difficult, especially when the medical data isn't clear or can be interpreted in different ways. Keeping the purity of forensic evidence is also hard because mistakes in gathering, handling, or processing the evidence could lead to contamination or wrong reading, which would make it less useful in court. To make sure that their results are valid and trustworthy in court, forensic doctors have to follow certain rules and steps. It's also hard for jurors and judges who don't know much about medicine because forensic surgeries are complicated and you need special skills to understand medical proof. If forensic doctors want to be sure that their evidence is related to the case, they need to share their results in a clear and open way. In forensic surgery, doctors have to be fair and not make any biased decisions, even if they are not the ones who are keeping the results. This can lead to ethical problems. These problems show how important strict rules are in forensic surgery and how professionals need to keep learning so that forensic proof can be used effectively in court.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The criminal justice system relies on forensic surgery a lot because it gives detectives and lawyers important information that changes the case. Medical experts called forensic doctors help figure out how and why someone died by looking at patterns of damage and harm and giving their opinion. They also help figure out whether a death was intentionally or naturally caused, or if it was a suicide. Their knowledge makes sure that any medical proof presented in court will back either the prosecution or the defence. This helps police narrow down their list of suspects and plan their investigations. Forensic doctors help prove the accuracy of medical finds, which is often very important for the outcome of court cases. Forensic doctors need to know about important things that can change the course of a criminal case. Some of these factors are the victim's medical history, the type of damage they sustained, and the most likely tool used. By connecting complicated medical information to the legal system, they help judges, juries, and lawyers explain their decisions. In places other than courts, the results of forensic surgery could change the charge, the sentence, or even clear someone who is not guilty. Even though it can be hard to get objective, fair comments and understand what medical proof means, forensic surgery is still needed to make sure that justice is done. Forensic processes are always changing, and forensic surgeons and lawyers are working together more. This shows how important forensic surgery is to modern crime cases. A lot of what keeps the criminal justice system honest and makes sure the truth wins in court depends on forensic doctors being able to provide correct, unbiased, scientifically sound evidence.

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