Vernard Irvine Adams: Guidelines for Reports by Autopsy Pathologists

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The production of an autopsy report is a skill that pathologists usually learn by reading autopsy reports generated by others and adapting the general format of those reports by including their own ideas and utilizing any inherent writing skills they might have. As the years pass, the report may be improved and adapted, but any changes are based on personal preference rather than any set of standard guidelines.

Finally, a set of guidelines has been produced by Dr. Vernard Adams. However, Dr. Adams goes beyond a simple set of guidelines and describes how an autopsy report should be organized, what should be included and excluded, how to describe the external and internal examinations, including the proper way to describe wounds and disease states of individual organs, and how to

formulate opinions. Dr. Adams also includes a thorough discussion of death certificates, cause and manner of death, and problems related to insurance companies and manner of death determinations. He even includes a few lessons in the basics of English grammar and word usage.

Although the rules for record retention may vary among jurisdictions, this book includes a section on general rules of good laboratory practice pertaining to records, record retention, and record disposal.

This book would logically seem to be intended for the beginning pathologist, pathology resident, or medical student, but should also be included in the library of any autopsy pathologist as a valuable reference.

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