The Good, The Bad, and The DO NOT DO THIS

Abstract

Implementing new technology is a challenging task, but essential to the advancement of our laboratories. The consistent need for faster and more sensitive instruments and techniques has impacted all areas of forensic science. It is also not limited to merely the addition of a new instrument to your toxicology or DNA section; technology implementation can extend to the use of new computers, operating systems, software, and tools which impacts all areas of operation. While these changes cannot be avoided, they can be managed in a manner as to make the process as painless, sustainable, and beneficial to your staff and operations as possible.

The on-going advancements made in the Allegheny County Office of the Medical Examiner (ACOME) have been approached from a variety of different directions. Each improvement effort and change involved different leaders, participants, concerns, potential benefits, and setbacks. The Allegheny County Office of the Medical Examiner has utilized a variety of methods of implementing major changes in technology. From the addition of liquid handling robots in the DNA Section and going paperless for Body Fluid Identification case documentation, to the launching of a document control and process management software and upgrading to the newest version of SharePoint for information sharing as office-wide efforts, each new implementation has resulted in lessons learned. Some approaches have proved successful and provided useful approaches for the future, others have required improvement, and others have never been utilized again in other projects. Proper project management and efficiency tools can make the difference between the effort being a successful transformation, or a painful alteration, to the existing operations of your laboratory.

This talk will cover experiences, observations, and recommendations of how the Allegheny County Office of the Medical Examiner has utilized various tools and approaches to the improvement of existing technologies and implementation of new technology within its forensic laboratory and on an office wide level, spanning both laboratory operations and morgue operations.