

# *Wellbeing following exposure to death as part of forensic science studies*

## *Bienestar tras la exposición a la muerte en el marco de los estudios forenses*

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**ABSTRACT:** Forensic science is a major field of study within academia with universities offering a range of multidisciplinary and specific courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The teaching of these programmes may be supplemented with visits to a mortuary to view autopsy, anatomical dissection facility or taphonomic facility to aid the teaching of the medico-legal investigation and the analysis of human remains.

These visits are also considered beneficial in preparing students for a future vocation in these professions, and in providing elements of the so-called 'hidden curriculum'. These experiences raise specific health and safety, ethical and moral issues. In particular the psychological wellbeing of students, whose first encounter with a deceased may be in this context.

The responses of medical students to such experiences have been documented in the literature, whereas in forensic science no such studies have been conducted. The preparation of students, the support during and post-event are important components of these educational experiences and there is no evidence of the consistent delivery of these, with generic student support often be considered sufficient.

This study considers a range of issues associated with such student experiences and provides data on forensic science student responses and wellbeing following the viewing of autopsy and decomposed human remains. This evidence supports the recommendation of specific pre- and post-event support procedures in such settings.