



VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC MEDICINE

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POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Clinical Forensic Medicine Registrar position at the VIFM is a unique opportunity for medical graduates to undertake a term that offers an introduction into the field of Forensic Medicine, and provides in-depth training in medico-legal skills that are invaluable to any doctor.

The registrar terms are available as six-month rotations and are accredited for specialist training with the Faculty of Clinical Forensic Medicine, Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia; special skills training with the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine; extended skills training with the RACGP Royal Australasian College of General Practitioners; and with the Sexual Health Chapter of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Pre-vocational trainees and trainees from other specialist colleges can also benefit greatly from the term, which provides an exceptional medico-legal adjunct to clinical work in any area of medicine. Opportunities exist during the term for exposure to the forensic fields of Pathology, Toxicology, Anthropology, Odontology, Psychiatry, and Forensic Radiology.

Registrars work in a friendly non-hospital environment where there is a strong emphasis on peer support and staff well-being. During their term, registrars receive regular formal and informal teaching, and acquire invaluable practical skills as they achieve the following objectives:

- Gain an understanding of the role and services provided by the clinical forensic medicine service at the VIFM.
- Participate in educational and audit activities, both at the VIFM and at associated healthcare and law enforcement settings.
- Develop competency in forensic interview techniques including assessment, treatment and disposition issues pertaining to victims and suspects.
- Develop confidence in the diagnosis and treatment of acute medical problems in the forensic setting.
- Develop skills in forensic procedures:
 - Sexual assault examinations
 - Physical assault examinations
 - Forensic evidence collection and observing chain-of-custody
 - Clinical photography
- Learn about STI prophylaxis, emergency contraception, assault counseling and advice.

Learn about injury documentation and interpretation.

- Liaise with other forensic specialists at the VIFM and learn how to interpret findings in each of their expert fields.
- Understand the structure and function of the police force.
- Understand the judicial system and court proceedings.
- Optimise the skills of medico-legal report writing and giving evidence in court.
- Appreciate the inter-relationship between forensic medicine, hospital medicine and community medicine.

The job involves a combination of work during office hours and on-call services (including night and weekend work) in a rotating roster that is set out at the commencement of the term. The work generally entails attendance at metropolitan police stations, forensic examination suites, and Melbourne hospitals to provide forensic services.

Registrars work closely with a team of senior forensic physicians who are available for advice and back-up at all times. Each week there are dedicated registrar teaching sessions and opportunities for feedback and review. Formal supervision of casework, written reports and court presentations is warmly encouraged.

Registrars also have the opportunity to undertake research in clinical forensic medicine. Research projects can be tailored to appeal to personal interests, fulfil specialty college requirements, or to form the basis of higher university qualifications.

The position of Clinical Forensic Registrar at the VIFM provides a doctor with the opportunity to work in a unique, stimulating and supervised environment. The core work encompasses a diverse range of important clinical and non-clinical principles in areas such as gynaecology, psychiatry, toxicology, medicine and the law, and bioethics. Additional activities ensure exposure to the services that interface with clinical medicine such as forensic scientific services and the police and judicial systems. There is enormous scope to pursue ongoing interests and research in all aspects of Forensic Medicine.

For more information please contact Dr Nicola Cunningham on (03) 96844480, cfm@vifm.org.

Testimonials

“When I started as a CFM registrar I had no idea what to expect but I was fascinated by the integration of medicine and law and I wanted to learn more. I am so grateful to the CFM team for giving me the opportunity, because after I settled in to the job I could not think of a more interesting and unique area of medicine where we had the opportunity to attend police stations and hospitals all over Melbourne to provide the police with medical assistance. I learnt many valuable skills including how to prepare for court as an expert witness, how to properly document notes that are defensible in court and how to assess physical and sexual injuries and interpret them for the police and the courts. During this term my eyes were opened to a completely new facet of medicine and I loved the forensic aspect so much that I have decided on a career change and am actively pursuing a career in forensic psychiatry.”

Critical Care HMO

“Working at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine has been a great honour and privilege. This world-leading institute and its supportive staff have provided me with a rich and diverse range of clinical experiences working both within the hospital setting and the wider community. I have gained valuable skills which I will take forward into my future career.”

Emergency Medicine Trainee – Provisional Phase Training

“I was already working as a qualified General Practitioner, and not anticipating a career change when I stumbled upon Clinical Forensic Medicine, which was an area I was not previously familiar with. I enjoyed my six month registrar term to such an extent that I am now continuing my training at VIFM in Clinical Forensic Medicine through the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. On any given day, you might find yourself collecting forensic DNA specimens from a victim of sexual assault, photographing injuries on victims or perpetrators of interpersonal violence, collecting roadside blood specimens, assessing fitness for interview of detainees in police custody at police stations, and preparing reports for legal proceedings. I enjoy being part of a valued multidisciplinary team, working closely with police, other forensic medical officers, forensic nurse examiners, sexual assault counsellors and hospital staff. No two days are alike - any given day may take you anywhere in Melbourne, to police stations, hospitals, and sexual assault crisis care units.”

General Practitioner

“Whilst undertaking the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program, I completed a six month term in Clinical Forensic Medicine with VIFM. Looking back, it was an exciting opportunity to have spent part of my training in a field relatively unknown to many medical graduates and clinicians. My insights have broadened to include, but not limited to, sexual offences, family violence, injury interpretation, and forensic photography. It was a privilege to work with forensic physicians, and communicate with members of Victoria Police. Having widened my skill set, I look forward to being able to apply myself in these areas, many of which have overlapping relevance to General Practice, as well as maintaining my forensic skills for cases I attend to whilst in regional Victoria.”

General Practice Trainee

“The CFM rotation allowed me to build on prioritisation and decision-making skills in the assessment of an often underserved cohort of complex, vulnerable emergency patients. The rotation improved my communication and collaboration skills not only with patients and fellow clinicians, but also other frontline staff such as members of the police and the judiciary. These opportunities were unique to my CFM rotation and have proven invaluable in my development as a fellow of ACEM. The professionalism and scholarship role-modelled, encouraged and supported by my supervisors for this rotation was without doubt the best I have encountered in any rotation throughout the entirety of my training.”

Emergency Medicine Trainee – Late Phase Advanced Training