

January-June 2021

Volume 30

Issue 1

PRINT ISSN: 2277-1867

ONLINE ISSN: 2277-8853



JOURNAL OF FORENSIC MEDICINE SCIENCE AND LAW

Official Publication of Medicolegal Association of Maharashtra

Editor-in-chief

Dr Ravindra Deokar

Associate Editors

Dr Sadanand Bhise

Dr Sachin Patil

**MULTISPECIALITY, MULTIDISCIPLINARY, NATIONAL
PEER REVIEWED, OPEN ACCESS, MLAM (SOCIETY) JOURNAL**

Editorial Office Address

Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Third Floor, Library Building, Seth G S Medical College & KEM Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. Pin-400 012. Email id: mlameditor@gmail.com Phone: 022-24107620 Mobile No. +91-9423016325.



JOURNAL OF FORENSIC MEDICINE SCIENCE AND LAW

(Official Publication of Medicolegal Association of Maharashtra)

Email.id: mlameditor@gmail.com

PRINT ISSN:

2277-1867

ONLINE ISSN:

2277-8853

Letter to Editor

A Strong Need for Digitalization in Medico-Legal Practice in India

Kattamreddy Ananth Rupesh^a, Ganja Chandra Deepak^b, M. Taquiuddin Khan^c.

^aAssistant Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, ACSR GMC, Nellore.

^bSenior Resident, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

^cProfessor and HoD, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad.

1. Introduction

Modern Medicine has been continuously changing for the better, both from the service provider and client perspective. Patient's expectations are on an all-time high amid the circumstances of COVID 19 pandemic which even forced the regulators of medical practice to legitimize telemedicine services, a long-cherished goal. The recent pandemic is certainly a game-changer in various roles of our lives, be it personal or professional front. We accepted and adopted many new practices in our lives under a very short notice. Every Medical practitioner donned the role of an infectious disease specialist, PCR technology has come to every medical school; every medical teacher started going live online to deliver lectures, tele-consultations picked up, lot of investments in to health industry! Perhaps, after the Second World War this is the time when there's a humongous impetus in our health and allied industry.

2. Information & Communication technologies in Medico Legal Practices:

Undoubtedly, technology and artificial intelligence are revolutionizing health care world-over but the real challenge is to introduce technology based digital solutions in health care delivery systems. In India, the NIMHANS digital academy has performed extremely well in this arena by successfully utilizing digital platforms for training of trainers and delivery of Tele-psychiatry services to cite an example.

Gloomily, nothing has changed much in medico-legal practice of autopsy surgeons in our country. COVID 19 dead body management was really a herculean task to manage for all of us with the minimal infrastructure facilities at various medico

legal centres in different states. However, most centres executed well in dealing with COVID dead bodies.

One of the long pending demands of autopsy surgeons is to digitalize their day-to-day work, enable them to submit reports online and also electronically depose evidence in courts.¹ Receiving **e-requisitions** from the Police/Magistrates, generating software-based medico-legal reports and updating them in the server on real time basis in stipulated timelines will ensure smooth functioning of Forensic Medicine departments and ensure transparency at our end.

Provision must be made for saving photographs and video graphic record of the autopsy/Clinical examination if required in the central server/portal maintained for medico legal services. A digital based platform for medico legal services will solve the major problem of archiving important data at our end (**Fig. 1**). Linking such server with Emergency Medicine and Hospital Administration Departments will also streamline the Clinical Forensic Medical services. Collaboration of the police, agencies conducting ancillary investigations and judiciary is highly required to successfully implement paperless e-medico legal practice (**Fig. 2**). Requests made to the Forensic Science Laboratories and other agencies should be generated online and reports are to be tracked thereafter.² Labelling of different containers with specimens for analysis with barcoded stickers generated from the software will also ensure chain of custody of case property and any mismanagement in handling specimens for ancillary investigations.

How to cite this article: Kattamreddy AR, Ganja CD, Khan MT. A Strong Need for Digitalization in Medico-Legal Practice in India. J For Med Sci Law 2021;30(1):69-71.

***Corresponding author:** Dr Ganja Chandra Deepak, Senior Resident, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India. Pin-110049. Email: deepakggdoc@gmail.com (M): +91- 9885927887.

Article Info: Received on: 12.12.2020; **Accepted on:** 11.03.2021.

Figure 1: Integrated ICT based Solution for Digital Medico Legal Practice.

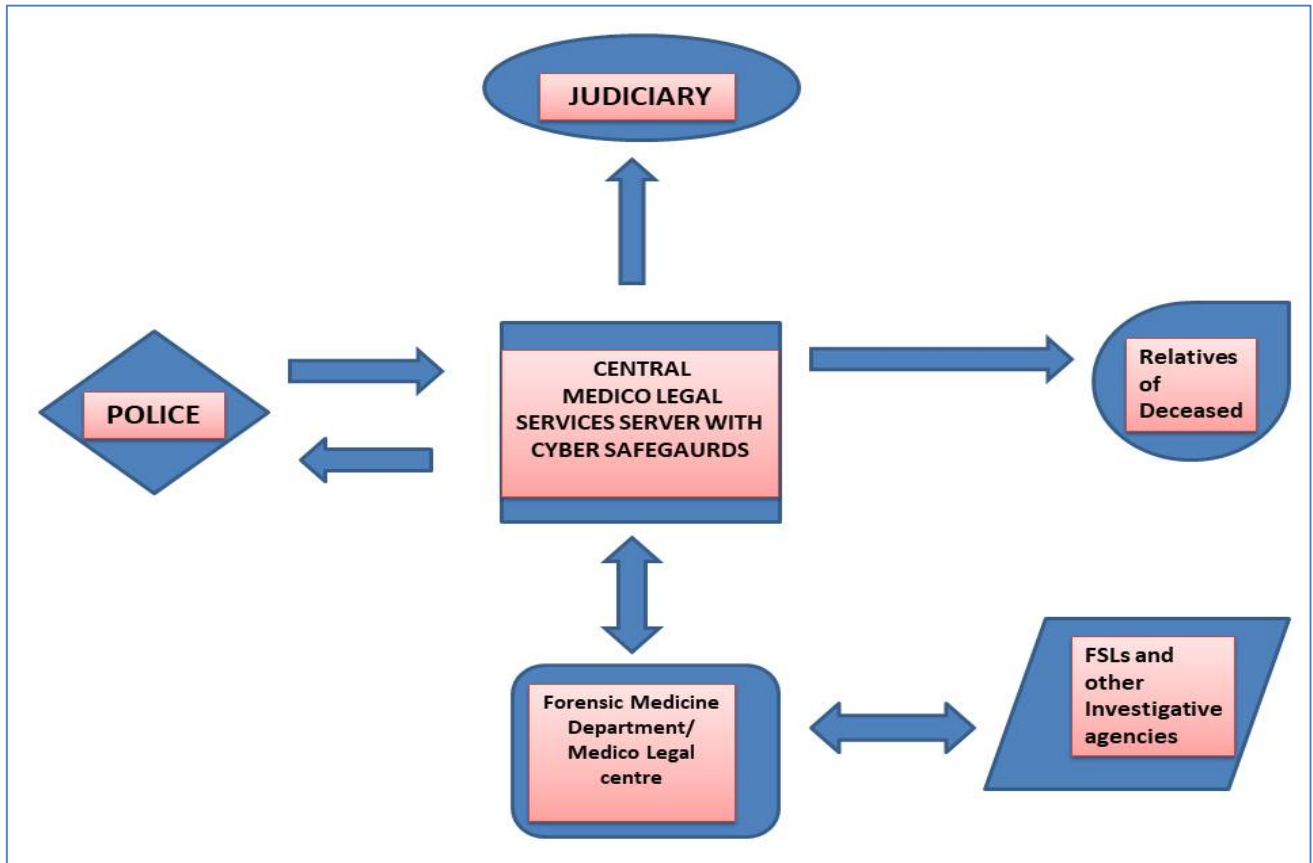
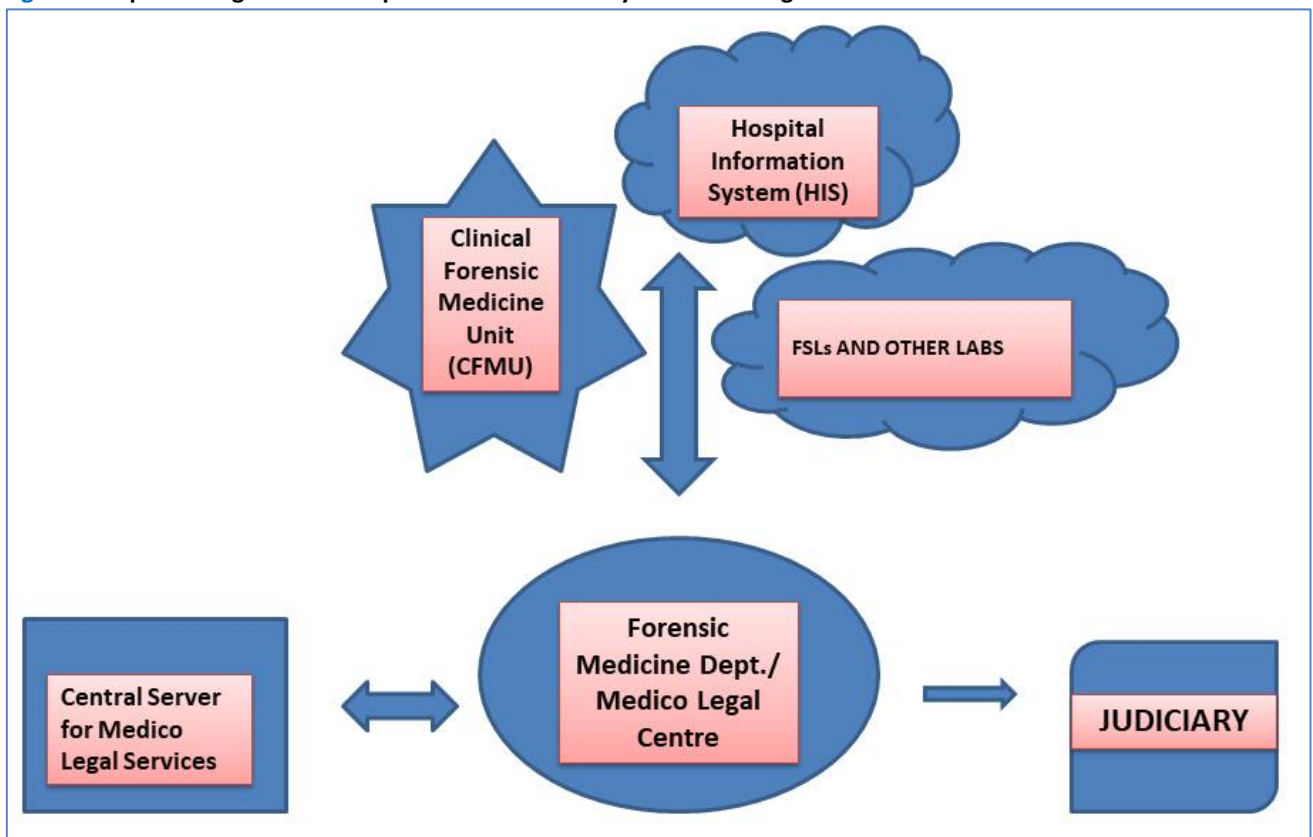


Figure 2: Expected digital intra-loop for Effective delivery of Medico Legal Services.



These changes will usher a new era in policing by improving efficiency, reducing graft and transforming policing in to a more citizen friendly affair. All digital solutions will finally benefit the next of kin of deceased in knowing the cause of death early and also receive reports for claiming insurance and other benefits.

The concerned investigation officer, jurisdictional judicial magistrate and the autopsy surgeon should have access to the all-necessary documents of the case from the same server.

3. Existing Digital practices in Medico-Legal Departments

Such digital solutions for Post-mortem Reports and all other medico legal documents were adopted long back by using MedLeapR software¹ in few states like Punjab and Haryana. However, there were connectivity issues that hampered the complete success of the project in the initial days. Some states like Madhya Pradesh also adopted an online platform for common medico legal record generating and archiving. The Madras high court has dealt the matter of impropriety in Forensic Medicine Departments across Tamil Nadu and mandated use of a software throughout the state for medico legal reporting.²

Digitalization can help us monitor the practices across centres in dealing with different type of cases, bring in standard operative procedures and ensure they are adhered with and make sure that the functioning of department is transparent and corruption free.

The other major reprieve continuously demanded by Forensic Medicine fraternity is to make electronic court evidence deposing a rule and physical presentation of medical evidence an exception. Fortuitously, many lower courts in the country allowed e-evidence facility for doctors during these pandemic times. This should be continued further hereafter.

In many instances the criminal justice system of our country is very kind towards the accused and allows them for videoconference presence during trial for various law and order reasons or other peculiar causes. Let us hope that they will value the time and efforts of a medico legal practitioner. Moreover, very few cases require cross examination and it shall be not so difficult to accept the proposal of e-court facility for expert witnesses. One can see that the entire higher judiciary is functioning in electronic mode without any hassle ever since COVID fear struck all of us.

4. Conclusion:

As the health sector is developing rapidly with respect to use of technology in the day-to-day practices, we reiterate the demand for digitalization in medico legal practice in all states of our country in both reporting and court evidence deposing as well.

5. Recommendations

A pilot project interlinking all the stake holders in the medicolegal system should be started at least in one district of each state to know the feasibility, hurdles and efficiency of such digital solutions in day-to-day forensic practices.

References

1. Vivek Varma, MedLeaPR – A first step towards ICT enabled Integrated Justice Delivery System, Informatics April 2013 Pages 12-13. Last accessed on 09/12/2020 at 03:00PM from https://informatics.nic.in/uploads/pdfs/7dde6b01_MedLeaPR.pdf. (Assessed on 22 December 2020).
2. RM Arun Swaminathan Vs the Principal Secretary to the Government, Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. WP (MD) No.78 of 2019 before the Madurai bench of Madras High Court dated 28/09/2020.