

We used a combination of questionnaires, interviews and workshop research methods. Questionnaires were provided to 17 forensic pathologists with fully qualified professionals and trainees who were selected as representatives among regional members of the Japanese Society of Legal Medicine. Supplemental semi-structured interviews were conducted with five forensic pathologists through referrals. In addition to the questionnaire and interview, we held a workshop at the Congress of the Japanese Society of Legal Medicine, during which the opinions were collected. A total of 17 participants were recruited from all members of the Society.

The questionnaire revealed two primary factors in the selection of the forensic pathology programme: (i) the influence of role models and (ii) the lack of standardization for minimum required knowledge and skills. Interviews revealed the following additional issues: (iii) problems with work, research, education balance and employment evaluation and (iv) a lack of employment opportunities available to future forensic pathologists. Opinions collected during the workshop supported the results from questionnaires and interviews.

All of these are important issues that affect the support mechanisms of new trainees who will select forensic pathology as their career. Important research in India revealed that forensic medicine is not preferred by medical students among various specialties,<sup>7</sup> which supports our results. To solve these issues, the IAMLE, the Japanese Society of Legal Medicine and the governments of many countries should work together with educators, universities and experts in forensic pathology to support new trainees.

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*Conflicts of interest.* None declared

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### Educational support required by new forensic pathology trainees: An exploratory qualitative study

Research studies on medical education have shown that the lack of new forensic pathologists continues to be a serious, worldwide issue,<sup>1,2</sup> affecting countries such as India, Japan and other Asian countries. We heard the same concerns expressed by Indian academic leaders at the 4th International Conference on Medical Negligence and Litigation in Medical Practice and at the 4th International Conference on Recent Advances in Forensic Sciences, Forensic Medicine and Toxicology (Indian Association of Medico-Legal Experts, IAMLE, 2013) in India. Conventionally, few physicians choose forensic medicine as a career path in Japan. Moreover, the Japanese government has cut personnel expenditures,<sup>3–5</sup> while they intend to increase the number of autopsies as a crime deterrent strategy. Studies conducted by the Advisory Committee of the Japanese Society of Legal Medicine found that the number of board-certified forensic pathologists throughout the nation has clearly declined.<sup>3</sup> Expert comments have emphasized the importance of solving issues in forensic pathology education.<sup>6</sup> We aimed to conduct an exploratory study to determine the support mechanisms required to educate new forensic pathology trainees.

Manabu Murakami  
Center for Medical Education and International Relations

Hideki Hyodoh  
Kotaro Matoba  
Department of Forensic Medicine  
Faculty of Medicine  
Hokkaido University  
Hokkaido  
Japan  
k-matoba@med.hokudai.ac.jp