

# Viewpoint

By Lance Ray



# One Point ... *There are Multiple Points*

In the not so distant past it was the norm in our industry to receive authorization to embalm while on a first call and have the embalming process completed before rigor had a chance to ever set in. Conversely, funeral professionals are now experiencing longer delays from the time of death to when a deceased arrives at the funeral home and preparation is able to take place. Some coroner offices are dealing with staff shortages, and significant case backlogs exist as a result. For example, last year CBS affiliate CBS Los Angeles reported that the Los Angeles County Coroner's office had a backlog of over 180 cases that not only delayed bodies being released to families for services, but most significantly caused added frustration and grief for families.

With the frequency of increased intervals of time passing between the onset of death and embalming, it has become ever more critical to effectively evaluate cases prior to embalming to both identify and determine effective treatments for the problematic issues presented in each case.

An embalmer is not an embalming machine operator, who merely flips switches, turns knobs and keeps a fluid tank from running dry during use. A professional embalmer is critical both to bringing closure to loved ones and to the success of a funeral home by utilizing their highly specialized knowledge and skills – and by taking the time and making the effort in executing those final touches that build and sustain the

reputation of a funeral home. How successful an embalmer can be is often determined by how well they are able to effectively evaluate their cases upon initial inspection.

As time passes after death, cases exhibit symptoms of putrefaction that will occur both externally and internally and increase in severity with the passage of time. Great forethought and consideration must be taken to identify which post-mortem issues will be treated utilizing arterial embalming, hypodermic injection of fluid, surface embalming or a combination thereof.

While a quality arterial embalming fluid is required for all embalming to ensure optimal results, complex cases

will frequently require the use of specialty fluids to effectively deliver the best results for complex challenges presented in the prep room.

The use of a superior anticoagulant works to improve drainage, removes post-mortem discolorations, and increases distribution for effective and comprehensive chemical distribution. An anticoagulant is one of the most frequently used specialty fluids in the prep-room due to the fact that that virtually every case benefits from agents that improve drainage and increase fluid distribution. We have to face the fact that any post mortem staining is a negative situation that directly reflects on the funeral home, and

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every step should be taken to reduce its presence in all cases. The fact is, that a quality anti-coagulant not only saves the embalmer time by limiting the number of vessels required to be raised, thereby by limiting the number of potential leak sites, but ultimately anti-coagulants improve the final results of an embalming.

Anticoagulants typically are formulated from some type of inorganic salt or the Na salt of EDTA. Some fluid manufactures incorporate blood solvents and thinners, such as heparin, to aid in

the removal of extreme lividity or difficult discolorations that are on the precipice of becoming postmortem stain.

Use of an anticoagulant does not guarantee a one-point injection in every embalming. According to recent figures, 68 percent of U.S. citizens are overweight. Deceased individuals with torsos with excessive weight caused by high amounts of fat deposits will likely have difficulty with fluid distribution to the lower extremities. Embalmers who are utilizing an embalming machine with the

capability to inject using higher pressure and a low-rate flow, generally speaking, will be equipped to counteract this condition. Embalmers who do not have access to embalming machines equipped to perform high-pressure injections with a low-rate flow will most likely need to raise additional vessels to effectuate optimal fluid distribution.

Anticoagulants are formulated to strengthen the receptiveness of arterial chemicals within the vascular system as well as stimulate drainage and ultimately improve both cell penetration and fluid diffusion. Specialty embalming fluids are no more a luxury in the prep room than lidocaine is at a dental office; and both products are designed to deliver more satisfactory results to the families served. Do yourself a favor and try using some type of anticoagulant for 90 days – trust me, you will see a difference. •

An advertisement for ICCFA membership benefits. The background is a blurred image of a person's hands writing on a document with a red pen, with a laptop and a blue mug visible. The ICCFA logo is at the top center. Below it, the words "EVERYDAY BENEFITS" are written in large, bold, black capital letters. At the bottom, there is a dark grey curved banner containing text about membership benefits and a website link.

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