3.3. Launching Courtroom Testimony Training for Professional and Expert Witnesses in Belize.

Alfredo E Walker FRCPath, DMJ (Path), MB.BS, MFFLM, MCSFS

Learning Objectives

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the pre-testimony preparatory procedures and activities.
2. Describe the sequence of events that constitute oral testimony.
3. Describe and explain the purpose of each of the three (3) component steps of oral testimony (examination-in-chief, cross-examination and re-examination).

Abstract

All professionals and subject matter experts in the various fields of medicolegal death investigation, forensic science, forensic pathology and clinical forensic medicine can undoubtedly be called to navigate the court system as either professional or expert witnesses. For some professions, it is a given that you will be called to court to deliver oral testimony. However, not all training programmes in these fields include formal courtroom testimony training which is necessary to function effectively as a professional or expert witness in a legal proceeding.

This presentation will (i) review the types of scenarios and courts where the delivery of oral testimony can be required of these professionals/experts, (ii) enumerate the reasons why formal courtroom testimony training is necessary, (iii) review the classification of witnesses, evidence types, burden and standard of proof and (iv) provide an overview on the format of courtroom training that the presenter has developed, introduced and delivered successfully for postgraduate residents in anatomical pathology and various faculty members of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, and has utilized to train other professionals such as staff of the St Lucia Forensic Science Laboratory and will be employing to train staff of the Belize National Forensic Science Service in January 2021. The principles of courtroom testimony training which will be presented can be adapted to suit any situation.