



New Centres to Offer Digital Autopsies in UK



Digital autopsies are set to become an increasingly common practice across parts of the UK with the opening of more new facilities providing the service. This revolutionary new technology uses sophisticated, 3D visualisation software and a scanner rather than a scalpel, offering a significant, humanitarian step forward in establishing the cause of unnatural death.

iGene®, the life-science company investing £50m to establish a network of digital autopsy centres across England and Wales, is expanding its service with the use of six SOMATOM® Definition AS CT systems from Siemens Healthcare. The company has recently installed the first of the imaging systems into its dedicated Sandwell facility in the West Midlands to support pathologists across the region in determining the cause of death.

iGene® will be installing the additional systems at different sites throughout the UK in the coming year. The digital autopsy facilities will provide comfort to families, in many cases allowing a cause of death to be known swiftly and with either no or minimal invasion of the body. This, in turn, can help make the burial or cremation process take place with fewer delays and ease the emotional burden.

“The merging of innovative CT technology with specialist software will allow these centres to perform advanced examinations, providing a comprehensive picture of the cause of death without using the invasive techniques that we see in current post-mortem practice,” said Russell Lodge, CT Business Manager at Siemens Healthcare. “The systems will provide radiographers, radiologists and pathologists excellent image quality and sharp contrast to provide an accurate cause of death.”

Experts predict that digital autopsy could be used to establish the cause of death in up to 70 percent of cases and they are particularly valuable for identifying cerebral haemorrhage, fatal aneurysms, lung pathology, and extent of trauma leading to fatality. Certain cases which could be difficult to identify during a conventional post mortem can also be more easily identified using the digital technique, often improving the accuracy of results. Where digital autopsy cannot provide the cause of death alone it can instead help to minimise the need for incisions to the body.

“Post-mortem imaging is quite different to ante-mortem imaging and it requires the reverse of a lot of traditional scanning practices. Siemens understood what we were trying to achieve and were flexible, tailoring their service to our unique requirements,” explained Claire Walker, Digital Autopsy Services Manager at iGene. “The new facilities offer not only comfort for families who are seeking to understand how their loved one died, in a swift and dignified manner, but a highly innovative option for authorities who can use them within investigations.”

iGene® has chosen the SOMATOM Definition AS CT systems because of the user friendly and intuitive interface and Siemens' unique STRATON™ X-ray tube offering. The virtual post-mortem process acquires a whole body scan at 0.6mm, hence a robust X-ray tube is required to avoid tube overheat. STRATON X-ray tube offers the combination of high speed and excellent image quality, eliminating the need for heat storage capacity with the tube cooling down to its original state within 20 seconds. The systems work alongside iGene INFOPSY® visualisation software to provide either non- or minimally-invasive autopsies.

Siemens Healthcare is one of the world's largest suppliers to the healthcare industry and a trendsetter in medical imaging, laboratory diagnostics, medical information technology and hearing aids. By optimising clinical workflows for the most common diseases, Siemens also makes healthcare faster, better and more cost-effective.

Source: Siemens AG

Image Credit: iGene London Ltd

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