



Office of the  
**Dane County Medical Examiner**  
Agnieszka Rogalska, M.D.  
Chief Medical Examiner



5/18/2022

Dear Ms. Wintrode,

Unfortunately, you did not provide a draft of your article for my review, however, addressing the questions that you have asked:

1. *Several of your employees told me that while you were chief you witnessed them being poorly treated - screamed at, yelled at, belittled, bullied and intimidated - by Barry Irmen and Dr. Rogalska. Is this true? How did you respond when you saw employees being reprimanded in this manner?*

I have never personally witnessed Barry Irmen or Dr. Rogalska interact with employees in a way that was unprofessional. I have never personally witnessed an employee be “screamed” or “yelled” at by Barry Irmen or Dr. Rogalska in our office. We have always strived to maintain standards of professionalism and collegiality in our department.

2. *Have you noticed an increased amount of stress among the staff since Irmen returned to the office?*

I have not. Nor am I aware of a time when staff would have the opportunity to feel “increased amount of stress” - if that were the case. There have been a number of uncompleted administrative tasks left by his predecessor, and he has been largely in his office working at his desk attempting to complete them. He is not restricted or banned from interacting with staff.

3. *Does Dane County have a current intergovernmental agreement with Brown County?*

Correct.

4. *Other counties' officials told me their medical examiners and deputy medical examiners reported being mistreated by Irmen and Rogalska. Have you heard this feedback from partnering counties? How did you respond? Would you like to comment on the management of these relationships?*

I have never received such feedback from other counties, their coroners or medical examiners, or their deputy coroners or medical examiners.

Indeed, I am aware that both Barry Irmen and Dr. Rogalska have made themselves available on their own time - after hours and on weekends - to assist other coroners and medical examiners when they have been approached for guidance or help on difficult cases.





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Barry Irmen in particular devoted a great deal of time in assisting Rock County during sudden transitions in their Coroner's Office, and La Crosse during theirs as well. Dr. Rogalska also worked extensively in Brown County, training staff and working to establish the office during their transition from a Coroner system to a Medical Examiner system. (Let me know if the difference between the two systems is unclear, and I will explain).

Dr. Rogalska has spent many years on the board of the Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners Association (WCMEA), working to assist and strengthen interaction and education between coroners and medical examiners throughout the state, on her own time.

It has been my experience that both of them have worked very hard to maintain excellent professional relationships with outside-county coroners and medical examiners and deputy coroners and medical examiners, and to raise the standard of forensic investigation whenever asked for help.

*5. Two officials in other counties told me they refused to enter intergovernmental agreements with Dane because of Irmen's reputation of being a bully. Would you like to comment?*

I have no knowledge of this.

*6. Two former pathologists reported extreme mental stress due to the hostile work environment they experienced working under Dr. Rogalska. One was diagnosed with circumstantial anxiety and depression. One alleged Rogalska whispered a racial insult to her. Things eventually became so antagonistic she needed to invoke a safe word. These interactions happened while you were chief. Would you like to comment on these allegations? What kind of work environment would you like employees to experience?*

I have never heard Dr. Rogalska raise her voice, lose her temper, or yell at another pathologist. I have never heard a racial insult uttered in the workplace, nor was one ever brought to my attention by a former pathologist. Both Dr. Rogalska and I (when I was the Chief) held pathologists to exacting scientific standards and encouraged them to be thorough and fact-based. Such standards are a necessity in order to defend a physician's opinion during questioning in court appearances. When working with pathologists in this manner, both she and I did so professionally and with the ultimate goal of evoking the best out of the pathologist's practice for families, and creating the most accurate diagnosis possible. Sometimes this can be difficult to hear, especially for a pathologist early in their career.

We are aware that this work can be very difficult and stressful, and our volume is considerable. Our goal is always to provide the most scientifically accurate and humane service we can to the public we serve and to support our staff in their work as best we can. Dr. Rogalska, Barry Irmen, and I have always been available -- by phone, by email, at scenes, or at the examination table -- to assist everyone in the office.

We want everyone to be successful and to feel fulfilled at work.

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We also accept that some employees may not be compatible with a workplace, and if that occurs - despite our efforts - we do our best to help them succeed elsewhere.

*7. One former investigator and chief deputy coroner told me he had one-on-one conversations with you to tell you Irmen's behavior was negatively impacting the office, alienating funeral homes, hospital supervisors, tissue banks and police departments. How did you respond to his concerns?*

Without more information, I am unable to respond.

*8. What was the final outcome of the 2020 employee relations investigation? What action steps did you take in response to what the staff told Employee Relations and the Office of Equity and Inclusion?*

The final outcome of the 2020 employee relations investigation was that the DCMEO work environment has challenges that are similar to other County work environments. The majority of employees expressed their satisfaction with the work they perform and why they chose the field for their career. We were given a list of recommendations/expectations for improving the office environment, and many of these have been instituted since the investigation (including morning meetings, supervisor clarification, electronic calendars, alterations in feedback delivery, more formalized training, excusing investigators from attending autopsies, encouraged use of the county's Employee Assistance Program, and more regular employee evaluations).

*9. Employees and former pathologists pointed directly to the behavior of Irmen and Rogalska as the reason they left Dane County MEO. While it's true there is a nationwide demand for pathologists, all investigators and paths that spoke with me said they loved their jobs and would have stayed had it not been for their negative interactions with Irmen and Rogalska. What reasons were you given for why employees were leaving?*

The reasons I have been given are varied, and included other job opportunities, family obligations, the workload, unhappiness with the schedule (particularly taking calls at night, responding to homicide scenes, and working weekends), geographical distance from family/friends, difficulty making new connections, as well as interpersonal conflicts with specific staff.

*10. I have been told the DCMEO's office is currently experiencing a backlog of hundreds of cases because of staff shortages and extraneous procedural requirements. How is your office handling the backlog? Are you anticipating new pathologists coming on board and when?*

Like the majority of offices in the country, we are also working with the tremendous shortage in available forensic pathologists. We are continuing to recruit and expect to see additions to our staff this summer.





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Regards,

Vincent Tranchida, MD.

Deputy Medical Examiner  
Dane, Rock, Brown, Door, and Oconto Counties

