

Susan J. Parson, MD, MS, DABP (AP, FP)



November 27, 2017

Monica Nino
County Administrator
44 North San Joaquin Street
Sixth Floor Suite 640
Stockton, CA 95202

RE: RESIGNATION AS FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST IN SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

Dear Ms. Nino,

This letter serves as the official notice of my resignation from the position of forensic pathologist for San Joaquin County (hereafter, "County"). As required per my employment contract with San Joaquin General Hospital and the San Joaquin County Sheriff-Coroner's Office, this three-month notice shall begin on Monday, November 27, 2017 and end with the termination of my employment on Sunday, February 25, 2018.

My performance of autopsies for the County will cease on December 1, 2017. At that time, the remaining portion of my employment shall be dedicated to completing and finalizing reports for the more than 150 open autopsy cases to which I am assigned. These open cases require report transcription, medical records, histology sections, additional investigation, ancillary testing, and/or toxicology results, and ultimately, report completion and sign-out. This number of open cases presents a demanding load for any forensic pathologist, but in keeping with my dedication to integrity and service to the County, I will ensure that these open cases are completed and finalized prior to my departure on February 25, 2018.

(As a note, transferring any of these cases to my colleague, Dr. Omalu, for completion would be an undue burden in light of his current caseload, which exceeds the recommended national standards for forensic pathologists¹.)

At the start of my employment with San Joaquin County on October 3, 2016, I looked forward to the honor of working with and learning from world-renowned forensic pathologist and neuropathologist Dr. Bennet Omalu. Indeed, working alongside Dr. Omalu this past year has proved an enriching experience, both as a medical doctor and as his mentee. San Joaquin County is fortunate to employ a physician of his caliber and influence.

¹ As per the standards set forth by the National Association of Medical Examiners.

Despite the privilege of working with Dr. Omalu, the behavior of San Joaquin County Sheriff Steve Moore and the working environment he created within the Coroner's Office made my day-to-day experience in the County personally unbearable and professionally unsustainable. Sheriff Moore's retaliatory behavior, arrogant expectations and of those under his employ, created an utterly untenable work environment – a complete hindrance to my professional growth and development in medicine and the discharging of my duties in a safe, non-threatening work environment, which is due all persons employed by the County under law.

In general terms, Sheriff Moore's intrusion into physician independence ranges from forcefully taking over physician scheduling to inserting himself into how and when Dr. Omalu and I perform our medical duties with attempts to control and influence our professional judgment and conclusions. This ultimately undermines the overall competence of the Coroner's Office in conducting objective death investigation for the County.

Sheriff Moore's leadership style orders physicians to report, behave, and respond to him like rank-and-file sheriff's officers, producing an intolerable work environment for medical professionals in any stage of her or his career. Despite the framework Dr. Omalu built to enhance and elevate the quality of medicolegal death investigation for the County, I am certain that he too will be unable to continue to work at the Sheriff-Coroner's Office under such conditions, resulting in a massive and wholly avoidable loss to the County.

As an Addendum to this letter, and under separate cover, you and the Board of Supervisors will be sent personal memos that detail specific instances of the injuries and abuses summarized above. Such documentation will also serve to expand upon the underlying, endemic, and pervasive concerns that have driven me to my untimely resignation from San Joaquin County.

At this time, I would like to thank you for the professional support you provided during my tenure as a forensic pathologist with San Joaquin County. I wish you and the County all the best.

Sincerely,



Susan J. Parson, MD, MS, DABP (AP, FP)

CC:

1. Steve Moore, San Joaquin County Sheriff-Coroner
2. Ted J. Cwiek, Director of Human Resources, San Joaquin General Hospital
3. Tori Verber, District Attorney, San Joaquin County
4. Sheela Kapre, MD, Medical Director, San Joaquin General Hospital
5. Patricia Hernandez, UAPD Representative