

# FORENSIC MEDICINE AND FORENSIC SCIENCES IN PORTUGAL \*

**Duarte Nuno VIEIRA**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The first legal texts to contain any rules relating forensic medicine expertises in Portugal date back to the 16th century. But the qualitative leap that actually allowed Portuguese Forensic Medicine to develop, bringing it to the stage where it is today, only occurred three centuries later, in the 19th century. Indeed, the first university teaching of forensic medicine appeared in 1836, with independent courses bearing this title, and in 1899 the first official forensic medical services were set up. A number of changes took place thereafter, and throughout the 20th century, always serving to improve the system. They culminated in a thorough reorganisation of the entire framework of forensic medicine in Portugal in the transition from the 20th to the 21st century, more exactly in 2000/1001. This consisted of unifying the Portuguese forensic medical services in a single National Institute of Legal (Forensic) Medicine (“Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal” - INML).

In the following pages we shall concentrate particularly on the present situation of forensic medicine and other forensic sciences in Portugal and on the glimmering future prospects.

## 2. INML STATUS AND COMPETENCES

As previously mentioned, Portugal has a single National Institute of Legal Medicine since 2001. It is based in Coimbra and has three branches, in Oporto, Coimbra and Lisbon. These are known as the North, Centre and South branches (they are the former Institutes of Legal Medicine). There is, in addition, a network of 31 Forensic Medical Offices (called in Portuguese “Gabinetes Médico-Legais”) scattered throughout the country and these, together with the branches responsible for them, are able to cover the whole country in terms of forensic medical examinations, providing the investigative services explained below.

The INML has the legal status of public institute, working under the indirect administration of the Government (that is to say, it is supervised by the Minister for Justice), while it enjoys administrative and financial autonomy and has its own patrimony. It has also the nature of a Government laboratory, exercising its powers jointly with the member of the Government responsible for science, technology and higher education. The INML’s mission is to ensure scientific training and coordination in the area of forensic medicine and the other forensic sciences, overseeing and guiding the operations

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Chairman of the National Institute of Legal Medicine of Portugal  
Professor of the University of Coimbra, Portugal  
President of the International Academy of Legal Medicine  
President of the International Association of Forensic Sciences  
President of the World Police Medical Officers

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of its forensic services and the experts recruited to conduct examinations. It operates in conjunction with higher education establishments, particularly with medical schools (public and private), through protocols in the areas of teaching, training and scientific research.

The INML can also sign protocols with hospitals and other health services, public and private, for the technical-scientific training of any staff engaged in forensic work, the joint carrying out of research projects, the use of these services' premises and facilities to set up forensic medical offices, and to carry out any forensic investigations which lie within the INML's jurisdiction. These protocols can also be designed to develop joint projects for research and for the cooperation of the staff of these health institutions in the area of forensic medical tests and investigations requested of the INML.

The Portuguese National Institute of Legal Medicine (INML) is legally regarded as the national institution of reference within its sphere of competence, which basically involves the following:

- Contributing to the definition of national policy in the area of forensic medicine and other forensic sciences;
- Cooperating with the courts and other services and entities that operate in the justice administration system, performing tests and conducting forensic examinations as requested, and providing specialist technical and laboratory support, within its powers;
- Superintending the organisation and management of the forensic medical services in Portugal;
- Planning and implementing actions for training, managing and assessing the human resources in the sphere of forensic medicine and other forensic sciences;
- Adopting quality guarantee programmes for the tests and forensic investigations within its jurisdiction and advocating the standardisation of their methodologies, techniques and expert reports, issuing technical-scientific directives on these issues;
- Directing, coordinating and auditing the technical-scientific activities of the branches, the forensic medical offices and the experts hired to undertake investigative work;
- Coordinating, guiding and supervising activities related to forensic medicine and other forensic sciences in Portugal;
- Encouraging training, scientific research as well as the dissemination of forensic medical work and that of

the other forensic sciences, and developing educational cooperation with other institutions;

- Providing services to public and private entities, and private individuals, in domains involving the application of forensic medical knowledge and that of the other forensic sciences;
- Securing cooperation with other kindred bodies abroad, and with international organisations.

### 3. INML STRUCTURE

The present forensic medical system in Portugal stipulates that there are three bodies in the INML. These are the executive board, the forensic medical council and the auditor. We will dedicate a few words to each of them.

The function of the Executive Board is, as its name implies, to direct the Institute. It has a chairman and three members, who are the directors of the north, centre and south branches. The Chairman is chosen by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Justice, and is appointed directly by them. He/she is expected to be a university professor specialised in forensic medicine, with a profile, training and experience appropriate to his duties. The Chairman selects the directors of the three branches, who are the other members of the Institute's Executive Board. They, too, should by law be preferably professors of forensic medicine or heads of medical departments whose profile, training and experience are appropriate to their duties. Advice about their choice may be taken from the academic committees of the faculties of medicine in which they teach.

The Forensic Medical Council is one of the oldest bodies existing in the Portuguese forensic medical system (created in 1918). It is currently headed by the chairman of the INML's executive board and its membership comprises the directors of the North, Centre and South Branches of the INML, a representative of the regional disciplinary committees of each regional section of the National Medical Association ("Ordem dos Médicos"), plus 11 professors of medicine from various areas, put forward by faculties of medicine (Clinical Surgery, Clinical Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Pathological Anatomy, Ethics and/or Medical Law, Orthopaedics and Traumatology, Neurology or Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry), and 2 law professors (one from criminal and one from civil law), put forward by faculties of law. The forensic medical council can further request the cooper-

ation of professors from other medical specialties or other higher education establishments, or other experts, who may also be asked to attend its meetings. The secretary of the forensic medical council is a person it appoints, proposed by the chairman, preferably a professor of forensic medicine.

The Forensic Medical Council has a range of functions:

- 1) Opining on ethical questions in the area of national investigative activity, and similar work done by the forensic services;
- 2) Monitoring and assessing the INML's investigative work, suggesting measures it regards as appropriate to the due performance of its tasks and reporting on reforms to be undertaken in the forensic medical system or which may have implications for its operations;
- 3) Reporting on the cooperation models the forensic medical services have with other services or institutions; opine, either on its own initiative or at the request of the chairman of the executive board, on matters related to the powers of the Institute and make recommendations in the sphere of forensic medicine.

But the main function of the Forensic medical Council is to issue expert reports on technical and scientific issues. It will do this, for example, whenever a court is faced with cases involving medical facts, whose interpretation is raising doubts, especially when there are conflicting views. The law states that the technical-scientific reports issued by the forensic medical council are not subject to revision. They represent the definitive view of the council on the specific question put, unless new elements are presented which offer grounds to change it. These reports are, therefore, the final word on the matter in terms of expert opinion, and the court's decision will usually be based on their content. So that the Council is not overwhelmed by requests from the courts, this technical-scientific and ethical consultancy can only be requested by the Government minister responsible for justice, the Higher Judicial Council, the Attorney-General or the chairman of the INML's executive board. Cases of medical responsibility are today the main situations presented to this Council.

Finally, the other body, the auditor, is appointed by the government and whoever is selected is responsible for inspecting the INML's operations, particularly from the financial standpoint.

#### **4. INML's CENTRAL SERVICES**

Various Central Services function in the Institute's headquarters. They are concerned with the coordination and realisation of the INML's functions. One of these central services is the Department of General Administration, which takes care of the administration of the INML's personnel, financial and informatics' resources. A Human Resources Division, a Financial Division and an Informatics Division operate under it. Another of these Central Services is the Department of Research, Training and Documentation, which supports and runs the areas specified in its name. The head of the Department of Research, Training and Documentation is also by law preferably recruited from university teaching or research staff in the area of Forensic Medicine.

The third central service is the Legal Advice Department, which gives all the legal help needed for the INML to operate properly. The Executive Board and the Forensic Medical Council also function at the headquarters.

#### **5. INML FORENSIC SERVICES AND FORENSIC MEDICAL INVESTIGATION**

Portugal's forensic medical services consist of three branch offices and 31 Forensic Medical Offices, as mentioned earlier. Each Branch is responsible for the forensic medical investigation work in its local area, and each has a number of Forensic Medical Offices under it. The branches work closely with the medical faculties, and are, indeed, inseparable: the university forensic medicine section functions within the forensic medical public services of the National Institute of Legal Medicine. And, as mentioned above, the directors of the branches and the chairman of the Executive Board are professors responsible for teaching forensic medicine in the medical faculties in their regions.

There are 4 investigative technical departments in the branches. These are: the Forensic Pathology Service, responsible for conducting post-mortems, forensic histopathology, embalming, and forensic anthropology investigations; the Clinical Forensic Medicine Service, which deals with investigating and examining people to describe and assess their psychophysical injuries and sequels, in various legal domains (criminal, civil, labour and public law), and carries out also psychiatric and psychological investigations; the Forensic Toxicology Service, which carries out all kinds of chemical and toxico-

logical investigations and laboratory tests; and the Forensic Biology and Genetics Service, which handles genetic identification investigations and tests, especially in terms of the biological investigation of paternity, individual identification, biological criminalistics, and so forth.

The heads of the medical technical departments (Forensic Pathology and Clinical Forensic Medicine) are chosen directly by the directors of the branches, and those of the other departments are chosen via open competition, and once again people who are simultaneously involved in teaching have preference, by law, to be appointed. Other areas of expertise can be created in the branches (pallinology, entomology, documents, etc), but working inside the technical services previously mentioned.

Only forensic pathology (autopsies, embalming, and anthropology) and clinical forensic medicine examinations are conducted in the forensic medical offices. This is to avoid people and corpses having to travel to the branch premises. The laboratory examinations are thus all concentrated in the three branches, and all specimens/samples are sent to them, using means which guarantee the chain of custody. To prevent duplication of resources, these forensic medical offices have their premises in hospitals, through cooperation protocols signed between the INML and each hospital, but they remain independent of the health services, and answer only to the INML.

Note that the law establishes that the INML is the solely responsible for medico-legal investigations requested by the courts. These forensic medical investigations have to be carried out by law in the INML's branch offices and forensic medical offices. Only in exceptional circumstances, if this is utterly impossible or if these facilities do not have experts with the necessary training, or lack the physical conditions to conduct them, can they be carried out by third parties (public or private) recruited or proposed by the Institute. The INML may therefore legally assign to or acquire from other public or private bodies, in Portugal or abroad, services relating to any forensic tests and investigations it is asked for, and also relating to holding courses and other training actions.

The branches and forensic medical offices of the Institute can receive complains about crimes within the scope of their investigative work, opening a judiciary procedure, and must send such information to the Public Prosecutor's office as soon as possible. Victims do not

need to go to Police or Court to make complain and began a judiciary procedure, and can go directly to the medical forensic services.

Whenever it is found necessary for the proper execution of forensic medical investigations, the Institute's branches and forensic medical offices can take whatever precautionary measures are urgently needed to secure evidence. In particular they can examine, collect and preserve items, without prejudice to the legal powers of the police undertaking the investigation.

The law also establishes the cost of all the tests and investigations undertaken by the INML, or referred by it to other bodies. There is a list of such charges, proposed by the Executive Board and approved by the Minister for Justice, and payment is made even when the investigations are requested by the Courts. All expertises made by the INML are paid. The cost of the investigations then becomes a cost in the action and is borne by the person or entity convicted by the court. When no guilty party is identified, or if the guilty party is insolvent, the Government bears the cost (thereby ensuring and safeguarding that justice is free to victims), but in other cases the State manages to recover the money spent on forensic investigations. The INML does not get any funding from the State, therefore, and survives solely on the revenue it generates through its investigative work, operating as a company.

Besides its mission of cooperation with the courts in administering justice, carrying out all the investigative tests and examinations needed for this, the INML also conducts tests at the request of public and private bodies, and private individuals. These tests and examinations cost exactly the same as those requested through the courts.

The Portuguese forensic medical system assures the expert complete freedom to carry out whatever additional complementary tests he/she sees fit to arrive at a full picture of the situation. The judge may not interfere in the decision as to which expert or experts are to conduct the tests or about which supplementary tests should be carried out, and the court must pay for all those that are actually carried out (histology, toxicology, genetics, forensic entomology, etc.). Obviously the expert should only ask for tests that are scientifically justified in the circumstances, and may be punished if any abuse is found in tests that he/she regularly requests.

Each expert has complete technical-scientific freedom,

specifically in terms of working out what to do in each situation, and what conclusions to draw, and is responsible for the investigations, reports and opinions he/she prepares. The experts are nevertheless obliged to respect and follow the standards, models and investigative methodologies employed by the Institute, and to respect the recommendations arising from the technical-scientific supervision of the services. They may also be inspected from time to time to appraise the quality of their work. The law states that, in exceptional circumstances, when urgently required by the service or when it is impossible for the expert who carried out the investigative work, the directors or coordinators of the relevant services may entrust the preparation or completion of the respective report to another expert, provided he/she is duly qualified for the purpose.

As part of their investigative duties, the doctors and other technical staff have access to the relevant information, viz. the content of the proceedings, which must be given to them promptly by the authorities so as to enable them to grasp the facts and undertake a more comprehensive and rigorous examination.

The chairman of the Institute, the branch directors, the heads of the technical services or the coordinators of the forensic medical offices can, by law, ask hospital clinical services, insurance company clinics and other public and private entities directly for clinical information relating to anyone examined in forensic medical cases for clinical information. This information must be supplied within 30 days.

By law, the INML can also ask public offices and authorities (in particular, the Ministry of Health) and private entities directly for whatever details it needs to fulfil its functions in the context of any ongoing legal actions.

In the areas of the branches and forensic medical offices where there are enough forensic medical experts, there is a daily roster of medical experts to deal with urgent cases. This roster works on a 24-hour on-call basis. Portuguese law holds that urgent forensic medical examinations are those where it is imperative to ensure that victims of violence are seen very quickly, with a view to collecting traces and samples that may otherwise be lost or undergo rapid change, and to examine the scene in cases of death by murder or manslaughter, or where this is suspected. The experts who are in the pool each month receive an extra allowance.

After the traces, biological or anatomical specimens have been examined the expert will collect and seal any sample that may possibly need to be investigated further, if the items and products examined allow this, and then destroy what is left. The sample will be kept in the forensic service for two years, after which period it may be destroyed unless the court has ordered otherwise in the meantime.

According to the law relating to the forensic medical services, no-one can refuse to undergo any forensic medical examination when this is found to be necessary for the inquiry or the fact-finding of any case, as long as it is ordered by the competent judicial authority. Furthermore, any person duly notified or called upon by the director of one of the Institute's branches or the coordinator of the forensic medical office to conduct an examination must be there on the appointed day, time and place. The competent judicial authority is informed of the failure to do so, for due purposes.

The person examined can be accompanied by a friend, a relative or someone he/she wants during this examination. The competent judicial authority can attend these examinations if it deems necessary, but this only happens very rarely.

Examined persons who live outside the area of jurisdiction of the branch of the Institute, the forensic medical office or specialist university or health facility where they have gone for their forensic medical examination can ask for the reimbursement of their expenses, and this amount will be added to the costs of the legal action, to be paid later by the party convicted, or borne by the government if there is no conviction or if the convicted party is insolvent.

It is stressed that the INML has a video-conferencing system which links it to all the courts in Portugal, so that the experts can give their testimony from the forensic medical services, without having to go to court, whenever the judge feels they should be heard. The time spent on this by the expert is also charged to the court, in line with the official list of charges, and this again is entered as a legal cost.

According to the law, forensic medical post-mortems take place in cases of violent or unexplained death, unless there is sufficient clinical information which, associated with other elements, enables the Public Prosecutor to safely decide that there is no evidence of a crime. In this

case the judge can waive the need for a post-mortem. But this can never happen in cases of violent death in the workplace or in road traffic accidents which result in instant death. Under the current law, a forensic medical post-mortem can also be dispensed with in cases when conducting one presumes contact with particularly significant risk factors that could seriously compromise public health. In these cases the chairman of the Institute's executive board can authorise the waiving of a post-mortem by sending written information to this effect to the competent judicial authority as soon as possible.

When a post-mortem is ordered, it can be held once death has unequivocally been confirmed, and it must be scheduled with the forensic medical service as quickly as possible, depending on the capacity of the service. As a rule, post-mortems are carried out by one expert physician assisted by a technician, but very often more than one expert doctor takes part. The presence of two doctors is required in murder cases, when crime is suspected and in complex cases.

It should be noted that the forensic services and police criminal investigation departments work very closely together, and the latter often come to the forensic medical services, being frequently present in post-mortems, for example.

It should also be mentioned that to become a forensic specialist in Portugal it's necessary to accomplish a 5 years residence, that is done with the same rules, same salaries as any other medical specialty. More over, the medical career in forensic medicine is absolutely the same as any other career in any other medical field, including the same salaries.

Besides the investigative services provided by the INML, which account for most of the forensic examination work that takes place each year in Portugal (more than 160.000 examinations were conducted by the INML in 2008), there is also a Laboratory of Scientific Police ("Laboratório de Polícia Científica" - LPC). This operates under the wing of the criminal police force ("Polícia Judiciária") and has powers only in the sphere of criminal investigation. This laboratory, established in 1957, retained some of the investigative areas that had up to then been within the scope of the Institutes of Legal Medicine, too, and which are now only in its jurisdiction, such as the examination of documents and ballistics. The LPC also embraces two spheres of activity which it shares

with the INML, and these are forensic genetics and toxicology. As a rule, in this type of investigation the forensic medical services undertake the examination of any organic traces taken from the victims it has examined, while the LPC takes charge of the traces and specimens collected from the scene, and they subsequently share their information. In fact, the INML laboratories carry out a great many tests on traces and specimens taken from the scene, cooperating closely with the LPC and helping it to respond more promptly to the growing number of requests, even those for testing and examining other kinds of samples and traces. They are actually responsible for most of the investigative examinations carried out in these circumstances in Portugal.

## 6. INML NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

As stipulated in Portuguese law, the INML operates in conjunction with higher education establishments, particularly with medical schools, especially research oriented ones (public and private), through protocols in the areas of teaching, training and scientific research. The INML can assign to or acquire from other public or private bodies, in Portugal or abroad, services relating to any forensic tests and investigations it is asked for, and also relating to holding courses and other training actions. This has indeed happened and the INML has scientific, educational and investigative cooperation protocols with a great many institutions and organisations, in Portugal and abroad. To avoid such things as extra costs in certain investigative spheres either where the INML does not have the necessary resources (scientific and human), or because the annual number of investigative tests and exams does not justify investing in buying specific equipment or personnel (for example, for forensic entomology or palynology), some investigations are undertaken in institutions (usually university departments) with which the INML has signed protocols.

Ever since its inception, the INML has also been very active abroad on various levels. It has been involved in teaching and research, taking part in the teaching of various Master's and other postgraduate specialization courses established in Europe, South America and Africa, and has cooperated in international exchange programmes, such as the European Erasmus and Socrates programmes. It has also collaborated regularly with a

number of foreign universities, mostly European and South American. This collaboration has related to joint research projects (in Europe it takes part presently in the Daphne and DRUID programmes), and to training schemes. In terms of recent training, it is important to note that the INML has been responsible for two forensic science courses run in Kosovo, at the request of the UNMIK, and it is currently preparing a training course for professionals from Iraq, under the EUJUSTLEX programme, and has trained professionals from many countries like Cape Verde, Angola, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Sri Lanka, India, etc. It has also played an active part in international missions on the African, American, Asiatic and European continents, both as an institution and through the individual participation of some of its members, particularly in forensic medical operations in the wake of disasters, like the Tsunami, or genocide and war, as in Bosnia and Kosovo. It has worked on missions for the UN (specially from the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Committee Against Torture), for the International Red Cross, for the Organization of American States, etc., and cooperated in legal investigations following request from courts in other countries.

## **7. INML JOURNALS AND REGULAR MEETINGS IN FORENSIC MEDICINE**

The “Revista Portuguesa do Dano Corporal” – a journal specifically in the area of Clinical Forensic Medicine, of sound quality - is published annually by the INML. It is widely read in all Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries, including those in South America and Africa. A new journal, probably entitled the “Revista Ibero-latino-americana de Medicina Legal e Ciências Forenses”, in which each article will be published simultaneously in Portuguese or Spanish and English, is in perspective for a near future.

A National Forensic Medicine Conference has been organised every year since the National Institute of Legal Medicine was created. This has always been held on the second weekend of November and it rotates between the centre, south and north of Portugal, being organised by one of the forensic medical services in each of these regions. These conferences are always preceded by workshops on specific topics.

As well as this annual conference, every four years Portugal and Spain organise one joint scientific meeting

on Forensic Medicine, called the “Congresso Ibérico de Medicina Legal”, and another one in the specific area of Assessment of Bodily Damage. This meeting is called the “Congresso Luso-Espanhol de Avaliação do Dano Corporal”, and is also held every four years.

## **8. THE INML AND THE TEACHING OF FORENSIC MEDICINE IN PORTUGAL**

Forensic Medicine is currently taught in Portugal's seven Faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences, which are in Braga, Coimbra, Covilhã, Lisbon (2) and Porto (2). All these faculties belong to state universities: private universities in Portugal are not allowed to teach medicine (although dentistry can be taught in the private system).

Forensic Medicine is a compulsory part of the undergraduate course in medicine; though the number of hours taught and its place in the course curriculum varies (it is usually taught in the 4th year). The total number of hours varies between 20 and 65, and essentially covers elements of forensic pathology and clinical forensic medicine, as well as forensic toxicology, genetics and anthropology. The discipline also includes general notions of other areas of forensic and criminal sciences. The teaching of forensic medicine in most of these schools also involves practical classes with the compulsory attendance of a certain number of investigative examinations (forensic autopsies and clinical forensic examinations). At undergraduate level, forensic medicine is compulsory for all dentistry courses taught in state universities, in a subject usually called forensic dentistry, and in most first degree dentistry courses in private universities. But there are considerable variations in the teaching load and in the practical component of forensic dentistry teaching. These differences are less significant in the theory part.

In addition, all faculties of law in all state universities have to teach forensic medicine, and many of the private universities teach it, too, although the theory and practical teaching loads vary considerably from school to school. In the University of Coimbra, for instance, law undergraduates have to attend at least three post-mortems before they can take their final exam, and Coimbra is the only university to have this requirement for law students.

At undergraduate level forensic medicine is also taught in various other health sciences courses, notably in nurs-

ing and health technology degrees (pathological anatomy, clinical analyses, radiology, etc.), though it is not always compulsory and depends on the individual educational establishment's curriculum. Its teaching is thus much more variable. It should be stressed that there is a growing interest in adding forensic medicine to the curriculum of several undergraduate courses in an increasing number of schools.

Attention is drawn to the fact that the system of university autonomy in Portugal has led several universities to allow students from one degree course to attend subjects in a course that is completely unrelated to the one they are studying (even taught in another faculty), but which they happen to be interested in. This happens in the University of Coimbra, where the Faculty of Medicine's forensic medicine subject is very popular among students from other degree courses.

At the postgraduate level, Portugal again has quite a choice of training in forensic medicine and other forensic sciences. Master's courses in forensic medicine and forensic sciences are available in the leading state universities, and these are usually designed in cooperation with the INML and its various forensic services (to guarantee the practical part). But the state universities, and many private ones, also provide courses in specific areas of the forensic sciences, with many courses being available in forensic toxicology, forensic sexology, clinical forensic medicine (including bodily damage assessment for insurance purposes), forensic anthropology, forensic genetics, criminalistics, forensic psychology, and so on. Postgraduate courses are normally open to graduates in any area and are very popular, greatly sought after year after year. It has to be acknowledged that television series such as CSI have helped a great deal here.

It should be noted that, in the area of forensic sciences, Portugal has had a specific postgraduate course in forensic medicine since 1918. The course is known as the Advanced Course in Forensic Medicine. This postgraduate course is taught by the INML in Oporto, Coimbra and Lisbon (which is where the INML had branches), in collaboration with the local medical schools, and was initially meant, and for many years was, solely for medical and law graduates. As time passed it was opened to other professional groups. It set out to provide additional theory and practical training in the various domains of forensic medicine and forensic sciences to anyone interested in

the forensic sciences, and lasts one year, covering all the sundry domains. It involves a strong practical component.

Physicians with this qualification are always preferred when public forensic medical services have to sign contracts to carry out investigations in areas where there is a shortage of forensic medicine specialists, as discussed below, or when the courts occasionally need an expert.

All the teaching previously mentioned usually is done in cooperation with the INML.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that Portugal at the moment has a Higher Education Institute of Criminal Sciences, in Oeiras, near Lisbon. It is run by the Criminal Police ("Polícia Judiciária") and also offers excellent training in the forensic sciences, aiming particularly to provide specialised and constantly updated instruction to officers in this branch of the police. In addition, it cooperates with several other institutions in training and scientific research, both nationally and abroad. There is very good cooperation between this Institute, the universities and the forensic medical services.

## 9. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

It could be said that Portuguese forensic medicine is in a particularly positive and expanding phase. The creations of the INML and its development have had really encouraging and positive results. What is more, everyone directly and indirectly associated with forensic and forensic medical investigation is agreed that things are progressing well, including judges, lawyers, insurance companies, victims, etc. This is recognised abroad, too. Apart, of course, from the inevitable occasional voices, mostly heard from those who saw the loss of positions or influences (real or imagined) in the creation of the INML.

The expansion of the INML will certainly continue, namely because the Institute is seeing its powers increased, especially now that it has achieved the status of government laboratory, and in the wake of a national genetic database being approved for Portugal, with the INML being put in charge of it. The Portuguese model has, moreover, been regarded as a study model of reference in light of the results it has been able to achieve and the value and investigative independence it provides.

More information about the Portuguese forensic medical services can be obtained from the INML website: [www.inml.mj.pt](http://www.inml.mj.pt)