As a forensic autopsy technician intern, I essentially performed the same tasks as the professional autopsy technicians. During autopsies, I assisted the Medical Examiner and performed any supporting tasks including cleaning and moving the body into the autopsy suite, setting up doctors’ work stations and paperwork, drawing fluid for toxicological screenings, weighing organs, taking note of any useful information during the procedure, sewing up bodies after procedures, and cleaning the working space. In between autopsies, I helped with other tasks in the morgue, as needed.

Everyday I learned completely new information about anatomy, physiology, medicine, pathology, toxicology and chemistry. I was able to see the ways organ systems interact, and the mechanisms of disease, trauma and death (up close and personal). Like many students seeking a biology degree, I’m fascinated by the human body, the way it works and how/why it can stop working. Working for the Medical Examiner was a great exposure to biological processes on all levels, from microbiology to gross anatomy.

Anyone planning to pursue a career in medicine is going to be faced with the reality of death at multiple points throughout their career. This particular internship is a great way to discover how you personally handle being around death. It also enables you to see what the body is like in all aspects and the internal organization. The more exposure to this kind of information on a realistic level, as opposed to a textbook, the more prepared you will be to deal with the medical profession. I’m now fully prepared and excited for a possible career in medicine now that I have these experiences under my belt.

“I’ve learned how to draw vitreous fluid and blood from the body for toxicological testing, how to use surgical and forensic testing instruments, how to sew the skull and body cavity together following an autopsy, and I also learned how to drive a forklift!”