

October 10, 1963



Honorable Stewart E. Tatum  
Prosecuting Attorney  
Jasper County  
Joplin, Missouri

Dear Mr. Tatum:

In your letter of August 23, 1963, you inquire as to whether the Coroner or the Health Department may legally require an autopsy in order to advance or facilitate public health purposes.

Jasper County is a second class county and the general provisions of Chapter 58, RSMo 1959, relating to coroners is applicable to the coroner of your county. We have found nothing in this chapter which authorizes the coroner to call a coroner's jury and thereafter perform an autopsy for public health purposes or the advancement of science. Likewise, we have checked the public health statutes and we have located no statutory grant of authority to public health agencies which would permit them to order an autopsy.

For your convenience we are enclosing a copy of a recent opinion issued by this office in regard to the office of coroner in Jackson County. Jackson County is a first class county, but we believe that some of the general discussion in this opinion may be of interest to you.

Yours very truly,

THOMAS F. EAGLETON  
Attorney General

CB:df  
enc.