

Othon J. Mena, M.D.
Omena Forensic Medicine

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POSITIONS, CURRENT:

2017 – Present **Assistant Chief Medical Examiner,
County of Ventura Medical Examiner’s Office**

2018 – Present **Co-Chair – Child Death Review Team, Ventura County**
Multidisciplinary meeting where pediatric deaths are presented and reviewed to identify contributing factors and circumstances.

2022 – Present **Presenter – Ventura County Medical Center Trauma Morbidity & Mortality – Present and discuss trauma deaths at monthly meetings.**

TRAINING:

2006 – 2007 **University of New Mexico, Office of the Medical Investigator**
Fellow in Forensic Pathology

2002 – 2006 **Dept. of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, UCLA Medical Center**
Resident in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology

EDUCATION:

1996 - 2000 **UCLA School of Medicine – M.D.**

1992 - 1996 **University of California, Los Angeles - UCLA**
B.S. Physiological Science

CERTIFICATION:

2007 **American Board of Pathology**
Forensic Pathology, recertified through 2027

2006 **Anatomic Pathology, recertified through 2027**

2006 **Clinical Pathology, recertified through 2027**

LICENSURE:

The Medical Board of California
United States Medical Licensure Examination (USMLE) of the National Board of Medical Examiners

AFFILIATIONS:

National Association of Medical Examiners

HONORS, AWARDS:

2012 **Anatomic Pathology Teaching Award, Department of Pathology, UCSD**

2003 **Los Angeles Society of Pathology Best Paper Award**

2000 **UCLA School of Medicine Excellence in Community Service**

1998-2000 **National Medical Fellowship Recipient**

1998 **UCLA School of Medicine Short-Term Training Program Grant**

1996 **UCLA Chancellor’s Service Award**

1995 **UCLA Dean’s Honors List**

LANGUAGES:

Native/Bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, limited French

PRIOR POSITIONS:

- 2009 – 2018 **Autopsy Pathologist - Sharp Memorial, Chula Vista, and Grossmont**
Perform all hospital based postmortem examinations within the Sharp Healthcare system.
- 2007 – 2017 **Deputy Medical Examiner**
County of San Diego Medical Examiner’s Office
Determine cause and manner of death in the investigation of sudden, unexpected, unexplained and unnatural deaths in San Diego County. Perform postmortem examinations. Provide testimony in criminal and civil trials and depositions. Field phone calls from decedent families, district attorneys, county agencies, and other parties. Instruct, supervise, and train annual forensic pathology fellows. Assist with continuing education and training of ME Office employees, as necessary.
- 2008 – 2017 **Assistant Clinical Professor, Voluntary, Department of Pathology**
University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine
Instruct, supervise, and train all UC San Diego Pathology and Naval Medical Center San Diego Pathology monthly residents. Provide two annual offsite forensic pathology lectures. Instruct rotating medical students.
- 2011 – 2017 **Chair – Child Fatality Review Committee, County of San Diego**
Multidisciplinary county meeting where I presented and we reviewed all sudden unexpected pediatric deaths to identify contributing factors and circumstances. Goal was to prevent future occurrences and make recommendations, and improve coordination and effectiveness of child protection, investigation and legal processes.
- 2011 – 2017 **Presenter - Rady Children’s Hospital Trauma Morbidity & Mortality**
Present and discuss cases at monthly meetings. Provide follow up information relevant to patients’ deaths.

RESEARCH:

- 2016 **National Association of Medical Examiners Position Paper: Recommendations for the Investigation and Certification of Deaths in People with Epilepsy**
Multidisciplinary and multi institutional collaboration and workshop (Chicago, Illinois, May 4-5, 2016) to review existing literature regarding death in epilepsy, and develop recommendations for its investigation.
- 2012- 2017 **Dept. of Pathology, Boston Children’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School**
Hannah C. Kinney, M.D.
San Diego ME Office collaboration for research regarding causes and mechanisms involved in sudden and unexpected death in infants, including SIDS. Office contact for projects and case adjudication.
- 2012- 2017 **Dept. of Neurology, Baylor College of Medicine.**
Alica M. Goldman, M.D., Ph.D.
San Diego ME Office collaboration and contact for research aiming to identify genetic risk factors that predispose individuals to epilepsy and sudden death.

- 2000-2002 **Research Fellowship, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health**
Richard Childs, M.D., W. Marston Linehan, M.D.
Immune mechanisms leading to regression of metastatic kidney cancer following non-myeloablative allogeneic stem-cell transplantation.
Development of tumor specific T-cell clones for genitourinary malignancies.
- 1999 **Clark-Morrison Children's Urological Center, UCLA School of Medicine**
Bernard M. Churchill, M.D.
Prevalence of prenatal and neonatal hydronephrosis diagnosed by ultrasound, and its management.
Quantification of bladder storage efficiency in meningomyelocele patients.
- 1998 **Ecole Normale Superieure, Lyon, France**
Jacqueline Marvel, Ph.D.
Cellular immunology laboratory working with bcl-X over-expressing genes, apoptosis, and identified key insertion points of retroviral mutagenesis.
- 1997 **UCLA Department of Urology, Center for Health Sciences**
Arie Beldegrun, M.D.
Database of over two hundred patients who underwent radical nephrectomy.
Clinical correlations between kidney cancer and adrenal gland metastases.

PUBLICATIONS

Ramachandran PS, Okaty, BW, Riehs M, Wapniarski A, Hershey D, Harb H, Zia M, Haas EA, Alexandrescu S, Sleeper LA, Vargas SO, Gorman MP, Campman S, **Mena OJ**, Levert K, Hyland K, Goldstein RD, Wilson MR, Haynes R. Multiomic analysis of neuroinflammation and occult infection in sudden infant death syndrome. *JAMA Neurol.* 2024 Mar 1;81(3):240-247.

Cummings, KJ, Leiter, JC, Trachtenberg FL, Okaty BW, Darnall RA, Haas EA, Harper RM, Nattie EE, Krous HF, **Mena OJ**, Richerson GB, Dymecki SM, Kinney HC, Haynes RL. Altered 5-HT_{2A/C} receptor binding in the medulla oblongata in the sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS): Part II. Age-associated alterations in serotonin receptor binding profiles within medullary nuclei supporting cardiorespiratory homeostasis. *J Neuropathol Exp Neurol.* 2024 Feb;(10):1-17.

Haynes RL, Trachtenberg F, Darnall R, Haas EA, Goldstein RD, **Mena OJ**, Krous HF, Kinney HC. Altered 5-HT_{2A/C} receptor binding in the medulla oblongata in the sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS): Part I. Tissue-based evidence for serotonin receptor signaling abnormalities in cardiorespiratory- and arousal-related circuits. *J Neuropathol Exp Neurol.* 2023 Oct;75(10):981-997.

Massey CA, Thompson SJ, Ostrom RW, Drabek J, Sveinsson OA, Tomson T, Haas EA, **Mena OJ**, Goldman AM, Noebels JL. X-linked serotonin 2C receptor is associated with a non-canonical pathway for sudden unexpected death in epilepsy. *Brain Communications* 2021 July;3(3).

Brownstein CA, Goldstein RD, Thompson CH, Haynes RL, Giles E, Sheidley B, Bainbridge M, Haas EA, **Mena OJ**, Lucas J, Schaber B, Holm IA, George AL, Kinney HC, Poduri AH. SCN1A variants associated with sudden infant death syndrome. *Epilepsia* 2018 Apr;59(4):e56-e62.

Middleton O, Ahterton D, Bundock E, Donner E, Friedman D, Hesdorffer D, Jarrell H, McCrillis A, **Mena OJ**, Morey M, Thurman D, Tian N, Tomson T, Tseng Z, White S, Wright C, Devinsky O. National Association of Medical Examiners Position Paper: Recommendations of the investigation and certification of deaths in people with epilepsy. *Epilepsia* 2018 Mar;59(3):530-543.

Haynes RL, Frelinger AL, Giles EK, Goldstein RD, Tran H, Kozakewich HP, Haas EA, Gerrits AJ, **Mena OJ**, Trachtenberg FL, Paterson DS, Berry GT, Adeli K, Kinney HC, Michelson AD. High serum serotonin in sudden infant death syndrome. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. July 2017 114 (29): 7695-7700.

Kinney HC, Poduri AH, Cryan JB, Haynes RL, Teot L, Sleeper LA, Holm IA, Berry GT, Prabhu SP, Warfield SK, Brownstein C, Abram HS, Kruer M, Kemp WL, Hargitai B, Gastrang J, **Mena OJ**, Haas EA, Dastjerdi R, Armstrong DD, Goldstein RD. Hippocampal formation maldevelopment and sudden unexpected death across the pediatric age spectrum. *J Neuropathol Exp Neurol*. 2016 Oct;75(10):981-997.

McIntyre IM, Trochta A, Gary RD, Wright J, **Mena O**. An acute butyr-fentanyl fatality: a case report with postmortem concentrations. *Journal of Analytical Toxicology*. 2015; 1-5.

Cantrell FL, **Mena O**, Gary RD, McIntyre IM. An acute gabapentin fatality: a case report with postmortem concentrations. *Int J Legal Med*. 2015 Jul;129(4):771-5.

McIntyre IM, Hamm CE, Sherrard JL, Gary RD, Burton CG, **Mena O**. Acute 3,4-methylenedioxy-n-ethylcathinone (ethylone) intoxication and related fatality: a case report with postmortem concentrations. *J Anal Toxicol*. 2015 Apr;39(3):225-8.

Kinney HC, Cryan JB, Haynes RL, Paterson DS, Haas EA, **Mena OJ**, Minter M, Journey KW, Trachtenberg FL, Goldstein RD, Armstrong DD. Dentate gyrus abnormalities in sudden unexplained death in infants; morphological marker of underlying brain vulnerability. *Acta Neuropathol*. 2015 Jan; 129(1):65-80.

Rognum IJ, Tran H, Haas EA, Hyland K, Paterson DS, Haynes RL, Broadbelt KG, Harty BJ, **Mena O**, Krous HF, Kinney HC. Serotonin metabolites in the cerebrospinal fluid in sudden infant death syndrome. *J Neuropathol Exp Neurol*. 2014; 73: 115-22.

McIntyre IM, Navarrete A, **Mena O**. Postmortem distribution of guaifenesin concentrations reveals a lack of potential for redistribution. *Forensic Sci Int*. 2014 Oct24;245C:87-91.

Randall BB, Paterson DS, Haas EA, Broadbelt KG, Duncan JR, **Mena OJ**, Krous HF, Trachtenberg FL, Kinney HC. Potential asphyxia and brainstem abnormalities in sudden and unexpected death in infants. *Pediatrics*. 2013 Nov 11.

Mena OJ, Paul I, Reichard R. Ocular findings in raised intracranial pressure – A case of Terson’s syndrome in a 7 month-old infant. *Am J Forensic Med Pathol*. 2011 March;32: 55-57.

Takahashi Y, Harashima N, Kajigaya S, Yokoyama H, Cherkasova E, McCoy JP, Hanada K, **Mena O**, Kurlander R, Abdul T, Srinivasan R, Lundqvist A, Malinzak E, Geller N, Lerman MI, Childs RW. Regression of human kidney cancer following allogeneic stem cell transplantation is associated with recognition of an HERV-E antigen by T cells. *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*. 2008 March; 118:1099-1109.

Drachenberg DE, **Mena OJ**, Choyke PL, Linehan WM, Walther MM. Parenchymal sparing surgery for central renal tumors in patients with hereditary renal cancers. *Journal of Urology*. 2004 July; 172(1):49-53.

Carvallo C, Geller N, Kurlander R, Srinivasan R, **Mena O**, Igarashi T, Griffith LM, Linehan WM, Childs RW. Prior chemotherapy and allograft CD34+ dose impact donor engraftment following nonmyeloablative allogeneic stem cell transplantation in patients with solid tumors. *Blood*. 2004 February; 103(4):1560-3.

Velasco AA, Drachenberg DE, Guo Z, Igarashi T, Chernoff A, **Mena OJ**, Linehan WM, Childs RW. Generation of cellular immune responses against the renal cell carcinoma tumor-associated antigen G250 by adenoviral transduction of dendritic cells. *Journal of Urology*. 2001; 165(5): 509A.

Drachenberg D, Velasco A, Igarashi T, Re F, **Mena O**, Linehan W, Childs R. Heterogeneous expression of G250 tumor-associated antigen in renal cell carcinoma. *Proceedings of The American Society of Clinical Oncology*. 2001; 20(1): 2447.

PRESENTATIONS

Mena O. “Fentanyl Death Investigations in Children”. California State Coroners Association. San Diego, CA, September 22, 2025

Mena O. “Forensic Science and Pathology”. Oxnard High School Law Academy. Oxnard, CA, May 14, 2024, October 3, 2024, March 13, 2025, November 4, 2025.

Mena O. “Forensic Science”. Bishop Amat HS - Career Day. La Puente, CA, March 13, 2024.

Mena O. “Crime Scene Investigation for Major Crimes”. Detectives and Forensic Evidence Technicians class lecture, Ventura County Sheriff’s Office-Ventura, CA, February 1, 2024.

Mena O. “Innovative Countywide Collaboration to Address the Opioid Epidemic – Experiences in Ventura County, California”. *National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Annual Conference – San Jose, California 2023.*

Mena O. Forensic Pathology Review for Anatomic Pathology Exam, UCLA Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, April 21, 2021.

Mena O. “Forensic Pathology & the Medical Examiner”, Oaks Christian High School – Mock Trial Team, February 1, 2020.

Mena O. “Forensics”, Ventura High School - Mock Trial Team, December 4, 2019.

Mena O and Young C. “Death Investigation and Certification” – Ventura County Medical Center Grand Rounds, March 27, 2019.

Mena O. Careers in Public Service Student Event, Career Panel & Career Booth, Marina Village, San Diego, CA, May 17, 2017.

Mena O. SUDEP and Tissue Donation in Forensic Practice & SIDS Program Paradigm. S.T.O.P. SUDEP Workshop, Neurological Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, March, 30, 2012.

Mena O. Medicolegal Death Investigation, American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants (AALNC) – San Diego Chapter, Sharp Human Resources Building, March 7, 2012.

Mena O. Forensic Pathologist, Pre-Medical Student Lecture, American Medical Student Association (AMSA), San Diego State University, November 16, 2009.

Mena O. Pediatric Death Investigation. California Department of Social Services (CDSS) – Community Care Licensing Division. December 3, 2008.

Mena O. “Ocular Findings in Raised Intracranial Pressure”. *National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Annual Conference - Savannah, Georgia 2007.*

Mena O, Igarashi T, Srinivasan R, Carvallo C, Takahashi Y, Drachenberg D, Re F, Barrett J, Linehan W, Childs R. Immunologic mechanisms involved in the graft vs. tumor effect in renal cell carcinoma (RCC) following nonmyeloablative allogeneic peripheral blood stem cell transplantation. *Blood.* 2001; 98(11): 856a. *The American Society of Hematology 2001 Annual Meeting.* Update presented at the Los Angeles Society of Pathology resident presentations.

Mena OJ, Drachenberg DE, Choyke PL, Linehan WM, Walther MM. Parenchymal sparing surgery for central renal tumors in patients with hereditary renal cancers. *Journal of Urology.* 2001; 165(5): 661A. *American Urological Association 2001 Annual Meeting.*

Mena OJ, Thomas J, Leverrier Y, Mathieu AL, Marvel J. Identification of retroviral insertion points in bcl-X over-expressing genes. *Journal of Investigative Medicine*. 27th Annual 1999 Western Student Medical Research Forum.

Mena OJ, Naitoh J, Palapattu G, Beldegrun A. The role of incidental adrenalectomy during nephrectomy for renal cell carcinoma. *Journal of Investigative Medicine*. 26th Annual 1998 Western Student Medical Research Forum.

POSTERS

Hsing DD, **Mena OJ**, Epstein D. A teenager with chronic gastrointestinal and pulmonary disease. California Thoracic Society 2004 Annual Conference.

Mena OJ, Carvallo C, Drachenberg D, Srinivasan R, Igarashi T, Linehan WM, Childs R. Donor T-cells mediate regression of metastatic renal cell carcinoma (RCC) following nonmyeloablative allogeneic stem cell transplantation. *American Urological Association 2002 Annual Meeting*. Childs R, **Mena O**, Tykodi S, Warren E. Minor histocompatibility antigens are expressed on renal cell carcinoma (RCC) tumor cells and are potential targets for a graft-vs-tumor (GVT) effect following allogeneic peripheral blood stem cell transplantation. *The American Society of Clinical Oncology 2002 Annual Meeting*.

Mena OJ, Carvallo C, Srinivasan R, Drachenberg D, Linehan WM, Childs R. Immunologic mechanisms of the graft-vs-tumor (GVT) effect in renal cell carcinoma (RCC) following allogeneic peripheral blood stem cell transplantation. 2nd Annual Society of Urologic Oncology meeting.

Igarashi T, Srinivasan R, Parkhurst M, Takahashi Y, Re F, **Mena O**, Barrett J, Young NS, Linehan WM, Childs R. In-vitro generation of human telomerase enzyme specific (HTERT) CD4 and CD8 T-Cell clones using dendritic cells transduced with an adenovirus encoding the HTERT transgene. *The American Society of Hematology 2001 Annual Meeting*.

Srinivasan R, Igarashi T, **Mena O**, Re F, Drachenberg D, Takahashi Y, Carvallo C, Barrett J, Young N, Linehan W, Childs R. Characterization and immunostimulatory properties of tumor-dendritic cell hybrids generated by electrofusion and polyethylene Glycol (PEG). *The American Society of Hematology 2001 Annual Meeting*.

MENTORSHIP

Active Mentor of ULAA (UCLA Latino Alumni Association, 2020 – Present)
Annual pairing and mentoring of current UCLA undergraduate pre-medical students
Ongoing mentorship of mentees, advisory role, shadowing