



For Immediate Release
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Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Jeffrey J. Barnard, to Retire After 37 Years of Service
Dr. Barnard's vision and expertise transformed the Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences

DALLAS, Texas --- After a long and distinguished career as the Director and Chief Medical Examiner of the Dallas County Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences, Dr. Jeffrey Barnard announced his retirement to the Dallas County Commissioners Court effective November 1, 2024. Dr. Barnard informed the Commissioners Court of his intent to retire on November 7, 2023, to give the County ample time to hire his replacement.

Dr. Barnard began his career with the Institute in July 1987 when the office was located on the medical school grounds across from the emergency room of Parkland Hospital at 5230 Medical Center Drive. In 1991, when he became the Director and Chief Medical Examiner, the medical team included himself, three medical examiners, and a forensic pathology trainee. During the Persian Gulf Conflict, the staff consisted of Dr. Barnard, one medical examiner and a forensic fellow and necessitated them each to work 21 days straight in order to handle the caseload and staff the office seven days a week.

"Few people in government service have had the impact of Jeffrey Barnard. He's brought closure to thousands of grieving families and been at the cutting edge of solving crimes for almost 40 years," remarked Dallas County Judge Clay Lewis Jenkins.

Dr. Barnard orchestrated the expansion of the office which moved into a new state-of-the-art facility on Stemmons Road in 2011. The office now has 14 medical examiners and two forensic pathology trainees in addition to a host of support staff. Deaths reported to the medical examiner's office has increased 60% since he assumed office, and the number of autopsies doubled during this time from 2,340 in 1991 to a high of 4,797 in 2022.

"What sets Dr. Barnard apart is that he is hands on and carries a case load equal to his medical examiner team. There is no substitute to leading by example," added Commissioner John Wiley Price who was a member of the Commissioners Court when Dr. Barnard was hired and was instrumental in his appointment to the top job.

Over the past 33 years, Dr. Barnard has vastly improved service delivery in the office while keeping pace with the changing landscape of forensic pathology. He rigorously sought and obtained accreditation from nationally recognized bodies and is currently a presiding officer on the Texas Forensic Sciences Commission, which investigates allegations of professional negligence or misconduct in the field.

“It has been a pleasure to work with an ultimate professional like Dr. Barnard. His service to Dallas County has been instrumental and will always be appreciated,” said Commissioner Dr. Elba Garcia.

Dr. Barnard has led a series of significant changes in the office focused on investigating and solving criminal cases in Dallas County. He advanced the DNA testing program, reduced the turnaround time for sexual assault kits, and created a process in the office to review “cold cases” in an effort to bring resolution to long-term unsolved cases. He also established a Forensic Anthropology Program to further evaluate child abuse cases and skeletonized remains.

“It was always such a pleasure to work with Dr. Barnard because he knew his job so well and we could count on him to provide the best, most current, service as a Medical Examiner. That meant being continuously educated on the latest techniques in order to maintain that high level of service. Dr. Barnard will be missed,” said Commissioner Theresa Daniel.

Dr. Barnard has worked on numerous events throughout his career including the October 17, 1991, Luby’s mass shooting in Killeen, the 2005 Hurricane Rita bus fire, the 2013 fertilizer plant explosion in West, the July 7, 2016 ambush of police officers in downtown Dallas, numerous plane crashes, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic that stretched medical examiner offices across the country. Dr. Barnard personally performed many of these high profile and sensitive autopsies.

Commissioner Andy Sommerman, reflecting on Dr. Barnard’s career noted, “It is with mixed emotions that we say farewell to a colleague who has become a friend. We are joyful for the new adventures he will face but we will miss his wisdom, insights, and experience and commitment to his craft. Dr. Barnard saw the county through major medical challenges including Covid, explosion cases, controversial criminal cases, and much more. He has consistently stayed a step ahead in his field by introducing innovations in SWIFS’ approaches to cases, while always maintaining the highest standard of professionalism. We were so lucky that Dr. Barnard chose to stay with Dallas County for his entire career.”

Darryl Martin, County Administrator stated, “Dr. Barnard has been a staple at Dallas County, and we are grateful for his dedicated service to Dallas and the residents of this County. We are also thankful that he has agreed to help find a replacement for this unique position.”

Dr. Barnard received his undergraduate and medical degree from Texas A&M and completed his residency and Anatomic and Clinical Pathology Residency at Scott and White

Hospital in Temple, Texas. He completed his Forensic Pathology Fellowship at the Suffolk County Medical Examiner's office in New York. Dr. Barnard is a Professor of Pathology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and has authored numerous articles, abstracts, book chapters and recently co-authored a forensic atlas. Dr. Barnard is married with two children and plans to spend time writing, fishing, traveling, and spending time with his family, including his three grandchildren.

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