Making 'virtopsies' a reality

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A new research project at the University of Leicester is set to play a vital role in continuing research into viable alternatives to invasive autopsies, which many families find to be unpleasant.

The research team at the University of Leicester's East Midlands Forensic Pathology Unit has won a substantive award by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to investigate and develop the use of cardiac angiography in relation to near virtual autopsies.

Currently, diagnoses such as coronary heart disease cannot be made by using CT scans. It is hoped that this new project will develop a reliable and cost-effective system which can be used to diagnose coronary heart disease from CT scans. The technology will be used to visualise coronary arteries in cadavers and make a diagnosis comparable to current autopsy practice.

The research is a collaborative project between researchers in the East Midlands Forensic Pathology Unit at the University of Leicester and researchers in the Imaging Department at the University Hospitals of Leicester. The project officially began at the beginning of June and will run for 18 months.

Professor Guy Rutty, who is heading up the project, commented:

"The outcome of this research has the potential to affect every family in the future, and is a significant contribution to the developing practice of using CT scans instead of autopsies. We are investigating a realistic

alternative to the autopsy and are confident we can produce a reliable and cost-effective system which can be used in the future as an alternative to the invasive autopsy."

Provided by University of Leicester