

Chief medical examiner promises to boost NYC's poor handling of criminal investigations

She is the closest thing to a hometown medical examiner that a city of eight million people could really expect to see. Born in the Village. Raised to be a doctor. Working at the local morgue.

Of course, that local morgue happens to be among the largest in the country, New York's [Office of Chief Medical Examiner](#), which handles roughly 12,000 bodies and performs 5,500 autopsies each year. Since late last year, Dr. Barbara Sampson has occupied its title role, the first woman to head the agency since it began investigating deaths in 1918.

Dr. Sampson, who had been acting chief since 2013, officially took the helm in December with the goal of pushing state-of-the-art research in DNA evidence collection and genetic investigations of mysterious deaths. But she does so at a time when the office is seeking to right itself after high-profile mistakes — a technician's mishandling of rape evidence; a body that went missing — sparked city investigations and risked tarnishing its reputation.

More recently, the medical examiner's office also found itself thrust into the debate over the police killing of Eric Garner on Staten Island after the agency officially linked his death to an officer's chokehold.

In an interview in her office, shortly after her appointment, Dr. Sampson said she hoped that a focus on quality assurance, along with a new lab supervisor and a 24-hour operations center for tracking bodies as they move from street to morgue, would curb human errors. She said that those isolated mistakes had not undermined the advanced science that was performed at the lab and was often presented at trial.

“The science was never in question,” she said.

Read full, original article: [New York's Chief Medical Examiner Seeks to Lead in DNA Research](#)