Case Series Open Access

Macroscopic examination of the lungs revealed severely edematous lungs, with the right lung weighing 690 grams and the le lung weighing 525 grams. Microscopic examination revealed di use alveolar damage characterized by di use hyaline membrane formation, pulmonary edema, type II pneumocyte hyperplasia, and numerous intra-alveolar macrophages. Postmortem infectious disease studies were signi cant for SARS-CoV-2 isolation from samples of the nasopharynx and both lungs (Figure 1).

## Case 2: Tombotic complication

A 58-year-old woman with a history of chronic ethanol abuse reported lethargy, rapid breathing, decreased oral intake, dry heaving, upper abdominal pain, and weakness for days before becoming unresponsive at home. She was unable to be resuscitated and was transported to the OMI for a postmortem examination to determine her cause of death.

On macroscopic examination, the lungs were di usely edematousthe right lung weighed 730 grams and the le lung weighed 630 grams. Sectioning of the lungs revealed multiple small, subsegmental pulmonary thromboemboli in both lungs. Microscopic examination of the lungs revealed di use alveolar damage in the proliferative phase. Postmortem infectious disease studies were signi cant for SARS-CoV-2 isolation from samples of the nasopharynx and both lungs (Figure 2).

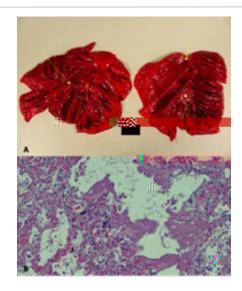


Figure 2:

# Case 3: Bacterial co-infection

A 62-year-old homeless man with a history of chronic ethanol abuse was found unresponsive. He was unable to be resuscitated and was transported to the OMI for a postmortem examination to determine his cause of death.

On macroscopic examination, the lungs were severely edematous. e right lung weighed 1325 grams and the le lung weighed 725 grams, both exhibiting severe pulmonary edema, with consolidation observed in the right lower lung lobe. Microscopic examination of the

lungs revealed di use alveolar damage consisting of hyaline membrane formation and intra-alveolar brin as well as acute in ammation and basophilic diplococci (Figure 3).

Postmortem infectious disease studies detected SARS-CoV-2 from samples of the nasopharynx and both lungs as well as *Streptococcus pneumoniae* growth in bacterial lung cultures.

### Discussion

ese cases demonstrate the rapidity with which COVID-19 infection can lead to death. Two of the decedents exhibited symptoms for only a few days, yet were found to have severe ndings on microscopy, and died at home without reaching medical care. Information pertaining to the circumstances surrounding death is lacking in the third case as he was homeless and unknown to the bystanders that discovered his body.

e di erential for di use alveolar damage (DAD) is long, encompassing infection, drug reactions, trauma, inhalants, autoimmune diseases, and collagen vascular diseases [6]. e most common microscopic correlate to the clinical diagnosis of acute respiratory distress syndrome, DAD, can also be induced as a form of ventilator-associated lung injury-an important association to recognize as most published series of COVID-19 autopsy ndings consist of people who received in-patient hospital management including intubation with mechanical ventilation [7-9]. Notably, all three of the individuals presented here showed some degree of di use alveolar damage on microscopy, reinforcing this process as being an early development in severe COVID-19 cases.

In one decedent, pulmonary thromboemboli were seen with a corresponding increase in interstitial megakaryocytes in the lungs, speaking to the need to investigate anti-thrombotic agents as early intervention in cases of severe infection. In another case, orid co-infection was seen with *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, the most common cause of secondary bacterial infections following viral pneumonia.

is microorganism has a history of increasing morbidity and mortality during previous in uenza epidemics [4,10]. Many of the same conditions that predispose people to Streptococcus infection

are conditions that predispose to COVID-19 morbidity and mortality including chronic conditions such as heart, lung, and liver disease and poorly controlled diabetes. As winter, in uenza season, and a possible second-wave of COVID-19 cases approaches, it is prudent that those at highest risk of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* infection are vaccinated.

## Conclusion

SARS-CoV-2 pulmonary infection can be rapidly fatal with thrombotic events and bacterial co-infection seen as possible early complications. is series highlights the need for further research into anti-thrombotics as early treatment and for vigilant campaigns for both in uenza and pneumococcal vaccinations in all high-risk groups.

#### References

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