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Case Study

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The tell-tale sign revealed homicide: A case report

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ABSTRACT

At autopsy we encounter cases where there is disparity between the findings of police papers and actual findings at postmortem examination. Many a times, the police bring the dead body with police papers mentioning the death as accidental in manner, especially in unknown bodies to shrug off from their responsibility or at when they are not able to appreciate any apparent external injury over the body. Many of such cases are those found alongside roads which are easily branded as "Road Side Accidents" by the police. However, tell-tale signs of homicide can be identified by a detailed autopsy. In this paper we present a case which was brought to our department with alleged history of accidental death as per police papers, however meticulous postmortem examination revealed a unique homicide.

Keywords: patterned injuries, homicide

INTRODUCTION

CASE HISTORY

On morning of march, a dead body of a middle-aged male was brought by police with alleged history of multiple injuries over the body caused due to fall from height. The body was found naked, under the flyover. An empty bottle of homemade whisky was also found near the body along with a blue color slipper. Relative of deceased said that he had a cycle and he was a watchman in a nearby factory. On first instance, corpus delecti was suggestive by the board as the body was found to be naked. On postmortem examination, the whole body was naked. Eyes were closed. Mouth was closed. Red fluid blood was seen coming out from nostrils. Rigor mortis was in

passing off stage. Postmortem staining was present over the back of body except pressure points. There was total twenty injuries were present/found all over the body at places, which were all antemortem in nature and cumulatively suggestive of homicide manner. They were all caused by hard blunt impact. Multiple reddish imprinted abraded contusion of cycle chain, leather belt and buckle, multiple reddish contusions and reddish abrasions on front as well as back and both left and right side of body was present. In this report we are presenting few significant injuries with pictures as shown below. Multiple reddish imprinted abraded contusion of design of beads in pattern of cycle chain were present over back of upper chest region in left side. On dissection underlying tissues were ecchymosed as shown in Figure No. 1



Figure 1 showing cycle chain impression

Multiple (3 in Nos.) reddish contused abrasion of size varying 2.5-1x1.5-0.5 cm was present over dorsal aspect of right elbow region as shown in figure No. 2



Figure 2 showing belt impression

A reddish imprinted abraded contusion of some object (belt with buckle) over the antero-lateral aspect of lower chest wall and adjoining upper abdominal region in right side. On dissection of abdominal cavity, peritoneal cavity contained about 1000 ml of red fluid blood and liver was lacerated over the anterior aspect in right lobe as shown in figure No. 3.



Figure 3 showing belt with buckle impression.

On internal examination, all the solid viscera were pale suggestive of blood loss. Left Lung was lacerated with left hemothorax along with multiple ribs fracture. Liver was found lacerated. All other organs were pale and intact. Stomach was empty. The cause of death in this case was opined to be injuries described and their complications, which were antemortem in nature and homicidal in manner and caused by hard blunt impact.

DISCUSSION

Blunt objects used for weapon of offence are numerous in number like bamboo stick, belts, iron rod, brick, stone and many more. Cycle chain rarely used for assault as its limited availability and hard to remove from bicycles. Abrasions and contusions are become significant when there pattern and distribution are peculiar. Blows from a weapon with a recognizable surface may help to identify that weapon, such as a plaited rope or leather whip, or a solid object with an

embossed pattern. Abrasions from objects with a recurring pattern, such as bicycle chain used in gang fights, or a serrated knife, can readily provide a clue to the nature of the weapon.¹ Although multiple injuries were present over the body of deceased but the fatal one was over the head and lung. However, the multiplicity of injuries has significant role in cause of death in present case as there were multiple contusions of various sizes and it is well known fact that significant numbers and size of contusions could lead to hemorrhage further causing hypovolemic shock.²

CONCLUSION

In this present case, significance of type of injuries, their peculiar pattern and distribution rule out the alleged manner of death. i.e., fall from height and homicidal manner was fixed by meticulous examination of the body. In forensic world, it is indeed proven that the things speak for itself

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