



Pathology & Biology Section – 2005

G2 Firearm Injuries in Angers: 1990 - 2000

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to analyze a series of 168 cases of firearm injuries in a French city.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by analyzing the rate of firearm injuries and deaths in a French city and discussing the different governments' politics.

Firearms are a major cause of injuries and death in many countries, especially in the USA. In France, injuries caused by firearms account for only a small percentage of trauma admissions and deaths but are frequently the subject of media and public attention.

Materials: This study is a retrospective study. The authors examined the epidemiology of firearms injuries presenting to University Hospital of Angers from January 1990 to December 2000 (Institute for Legal Medicine and Unit of Intensive Care). Information was collected from forensic medical files, police reports, and judicial files.

Results: One hundred sixty-eight of firearm injuries were analyzed. The mean age was 42 years. Of the cases reviewed eighty percent were male and 74% died. Of the 90 weapons that could be positively identified, 20% were handguns. Most often, the shooters used a rifle—especially a shotgun. In many of the cases where a rifle was confirmed as the firearm used in the shooting, it was a 0.22 calibre low-velocity weapon. One hundred seventeen (70%) were classified as suicides: victims were often males, about 43 years old and the death rate was high (75%). The head and neck was the most favored site, accounting for 72% of the wounds; the presternal-precordial region of the chest accounted for 17% of the wounds. Twenty-five percent (25%) of cases were homicides: 57% male and 43% female. The presternal-precordial region of the chest was the most favored site (40%). Five cases (3%) were accidents: these injuries were sustained during handgun training, cleaning, or carriage of the weapon. Only four cases (2%) were undetermined.

Discussion: In France, the deaths from firearms represent 3,100 deaths / year (population: about 55 million). This rate is lower than other countries with flexible laws. Stricter gun control laws were enacted by the government, prohibiting the ownership of military-style, high-velocity, semi-automatic rifles. Indeed, no shooting in this series involved highvelocity weapons, and nationally these weapons account for only 1% of all firearm deaths. However, firearms are a frequent means of suicidal death, and the number of homicides committed with a firearm is not insignificant. Continued restricted access to firearms is necessary to maintain France's relatively low rate of fatal injuries.

Forensic Pathology, Wounds Ballistics, Firearms