



## Pathology & Biology Section – 2005

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### **G28 Human Wicks: The Almost Complete Destruction of Major Portions of the Human Body by Fire Fueled at Least Partly by the Body Fat of the Victim**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to assess a fire scene that involves a human body that provided its own fuel for the fire.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by assisting the attendee in the reconstruction of a fire scene to establish if a human body was a source of fuel for the fire.

The charred remains of an adult human female were discovered in an abandoned house in St. Louis, MO, in early January of 2004. The female was determined to be the victim of a blunt trauma homicide. Much of the torso and lower extremities were basically destroyed by the fire, in some places even down to the bones (not even the hot, prolonged fire of the kind applied at crematoriums totally destroys the bones). Although it is thought that the fire occurred where the body was discovered, nothing else at the scene was altered by the fire. How such a fire could occur and go undetected by passersby during the fire will be discussed. The remains of this case, and others like it, resemble those described in cases of so-called "spontaneous human combustion" and this phenomenon or myth will also be discussed.

**Scene Reconstruction, Body Fat, Human Wick**