



D15 Intimate Partner Homicide in Lane County, Oregon: Its Relationship to Male Suicidal Ideation & Behavior

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After attending this presentation, medical examiners, death investigators, and public health officials will pay closer attention in their case work for the potential of male suicidal subjects to also have simultaneous homicidal ideation, particularly in relationship to violence toward intimate partners.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by increasing the consideration of the significance of risk toward homicide of male suicidal subjects. Implications for strategies of prevention, detection, and intervention in suicidal ideation in males will be discussed.

The rare incidence of intimate partner homicide is often amplified by intense public reaction coupled with scrutiny of public agencies by media reporting of such cases. Most scrutiny is retrospective upon how such an incident could have been prevented by intervention. The medical examiner has the opportunity of putting these deaths in perspective from their etiology in the entire context of public health and mental health issues in a community.

A recent such case in Lane County, Oregon involved an estranged husband who shot his wife at her residence as she returned from a court date at which he failed to appear. Responding police negotiated with him for several hours before he shot himself upon their entry to the residence. This case is resonant with a current case in the United States Supreme Court regarding the culpability of the law enforcement agency in failing to enforce an existing restraining order in a domestic dispute that resulted in a homicide-suicide of a father and his three minor children.

A survey of 75 homicide cases in Lane County over seven years demonstrated that women comprise 35% of homicide victims, and that about half of these women were killed by their intimate partners. Of these cases six also resulted in the suicide of their male assailants. The resulting question is posed: What percent of the far larger group of suicides occurred in the context of homicidal ideation toward an intimate partner?

This study reveals a significant number of suicides that occurred during or subsequent to violence directed at an intimate partner, short of homicide. One conclusion is that there is a great pool of males that frequently contemplate suicide as a mode of thinking and consequently engage in several modes of self-destructive behavior including domestic violence, suicide, and occasionally homicide. These cases usually occur without significant public awareness. This survey would suggest a relationship between the etiology of male suicidal ideation and the precipitation of domestic violence. Deeper study of this correlation may lead to strategies of intervention at the point of public contact between the perpetrator/victim and the medical-legal system.

Suicide, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Homicide