



### F46 Bulimia vs. Starvation: Natural Death vs. Homicide

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an understanding of the effects of bulimia on dental enamel, and will have an appreciation for another way that the forensic odontologist can aid in the investigation and prosecution of a homicide case.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by demonstrating This presentation will review an interesting homicide case involving claims of bulimia and starvation, and how the forensic odontologist can play an integral part in the prosecution of the caregivers of disabled persons.

Prior to January, 2000, 33-year-old, developmentally delayed, Junji Grubbs resided with his mother, Yuki Grubbs, in a mobile home in Soledad, CA. In December 1999, Yuki's Alzheimer's condition deteriorated. She and Junji moved into her other son, Shinji's, apartment, where Shinji resided with his then fiancé, Angela (Perez).

In March 2000, Shinji obtained approximately \$80,000 from his mother Yuki. He used \$65,000 of Yuki's money as a down payment on a four bedroom home in Prunedale, CA. Shinji placed title in his and Yuki's name. When Shinji and Angela first began to care for Yuki she weighed 93 lbs. Yuki's driver's license indicated her previous weight at 123 lbs..

At the time of Yuki's death, in October, 2001, she had dropped another 18 lbs., to 75 lbs.. Shinji said she choked while eating. Her stomach contained 600 cc of relatively undigested food material, including large amounts of rice, vegetables, and spaghetti noodles. The Medical Examiner's report states that Yuki died "as a result of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease."

Sixteen months after Yuki's death, her son Junji died, while under the care and supervision of his brother Shinji, and Shinji's wife, Angela Grubbs. Again Shinji asserts that his relative died suddenly while choking on his food. The Medical Examiner's report states that the cause of death was "Acute Bronchopneumonia, with malnutrition as a contributing factor". Junji was emaciated. At the time of his mother's funeral, Junji had already lost a noticeable amount of weight. He was approximately 150 lbs. Sixteen months later, Junji had lost 65% of his body weight! He weighed only 68 lbs. at the time of his death. The postmortem report concluded with observations that there was "no evidence of significant underlying natural disease, intoxication, or recent trauma." Junji had failed to receive adequate caloric intake to sustain life!

After Junji's death was ruled a homicide, his mother, Yuki's case was reinvestigated as a homicide also. Charges were filed against both Shinji and Angela Grubbs for felony abuse in the deaths of both Yuki and Junji Grubbs. Prior to their trial in March, 2005, prosecutor dropped all charges related to Yuki's death, due to lack of evidence.

The forensic odontologist had been called to the morgue in March 2003. At that time coroner's investigators asked if there were any signs of bulimia evident in the decedent's oral cavity. There were no signs of the typical enamel erosion on the lingual surfaces of the maxillary anterior teeth, or any of his teeth. There also was no evidence of abrasions, or ecchymosis, in the posterior of the soft palate, or oropharynx. The oral examination was completely unremarkable, within normal limits. During the trial, the testimony of the forensic odontologist contradicted Shinji and Angela's claim that they fed Junji regularly, but that he suffered from bulimia, and constantly vomited after eating.

Angela and Shinji Grubbs were acquitted of felony abuse charges in April, 2005, after a jury deliberated for eight days. They did convict Angela of a lesser misdemeanor charge of negligence, but were unable to come to agreement on the same charge against Shinji. Angela was sentenced to four months in county jail, and three years probation. As the District Attorney's Office was preparing to re-try Shinji for the misdemeanor negligence charge, he pleaded 'no-contest' and was sentenced to 90 days in jail.

This case illustrates a unique use of the forensic odontologist in the criminal justice system. Too often it is assumed that a forensic odontologist can only assist in the identification of human remains, or in bite mark comparisons.

### **Bulimia, Starvation, Homicide**