



Pathology Biology Section – 2006

G60 An Unusual Postmortem Change in a Child Homicide—Leaching

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about an unusual form of decomposition change through leaching (loss of fluid from the body).

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by creating awareness of such a finding and discussion of mechanism by which such a change occurred.

A child came to Singapore with her mother to study in a primary school. Her mother went back to China and left her on her own. The child went missing and sparked off a nationwide search. In the local hot and humid climate, bodies outdoors decompose quickly and early putrefaction begins within two to three days leading to early skeletonization in a week when the body is left in the open. Police investigations led to the arrest of a friend of the mother's whom the child was familiar with. After 3 weeks, the child's body was finally recovered, packed in nine plastic bags within a cardboard box in the undergrowth of a local hill-park. The case attracted much media sensation as well as outpouring of public sentiment.

At autopsy, the body was found to be much better preserved than expected. Bruises were well-defined and internal organs were well preserved. The condition of the body permitted better recovery of evidence of injury for determination of injuries resulting from allegations of sexual assault. It was also noted that after the autopsy was completed, signs of mummification became evident very quickly.

The presentation will discuss the cause of death, an unusual form of decomposition change, which has not been previously described in the literature, and the mechanism for such a postmortem change.

Decomposition, Child-Homicide, Leaching