



Pathology Biology Section – 2006

G9 Planned Complex Suicide: Report of Two Cases

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Planned complex suicides usually present a challenge to the forensic pathologist and the police in determining the manner and mechanism of death. After attending this presentation, attendees will learn the importance of a careful evaluation of all elements to reconstruct the lethal chain of events.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by improving knowledge of planned complex suicide in the forensic practice.

Case report: Two cases of planned complex suicide are reported. In the first case (ingestion of sodium hypochlorite bleach with associated razor blade wounds), a 27-year-old unemployed female was found dying in the early hours of the day in the bedroom of her apartment, lying in a pool of blood. Her forearms had been incised at wrist level. A blood stained razor blade was found near the body. Traces of blood were evident on the floor in the hall between bathroom and bedroom. She also presented clinical signs of caustic substance ingestion: the lips were burnt, the interior of the mouth was eroded, and the tongue was swollen. A bleach bottle (hypochlorite bleach, 5.25% sodium hypochlorite, pH 11.4) was found in the bathtub. Upon external examination, numerous recent incised wounds were found on the left forearm, most probably inflicted by the razor blade found near the body. These wounds were parallel and superficial, with deeper wounds appearing on both wrists, which had lead to significant blood loss. Autopsy revealed oral, pharyngeal, esophageal, and gastric mucosal erosions. Stomach contents contained blood and had the smell of bleach. All the internal organs were pale. Toxicologic analysis revealed sodium hypochlorite in gastric contents. Death was ascribed to razor blade wounds followed by ingestion of sodium hypochlorite bleach. In the second case, an 86-year-old man was found dead in the bedroom of his apartment. A blood stained razor blade was found on the bed, next to the left arm. A nylon cord, similar to that used for a clothesline, was found bound tightly around the neck several times. The left arm and chest showed multiple superficial incised wounds. There was marked facial congestion and numerous petechial hemorrhages in the skin of the face. Petechial hemorrhages were also prominent in the conjunctivae and oral mucosa. Numerous, recent cuts were found on the chest. These cuts were superficial and parallel to each other, indicating tentative or hesitation cuts. Numerous (68) recent cuts were found on the left forearm, inflicted by the razor found near the body. Most of them were superficial cuts of sizes ranging from 2.5 to 3 cm. Upon autopsy, recent hecatomb was noted to the muscles of the neck, especially the stern mastoid muscles. The tongue showed a recent hemorrhage. Fresh blood was found in the larynx and trachea. The lung showed mild congestion. Toxicological analysis did not detect any drugs or alcohol. Death was ascribed to asphyxia due to strangulation by ligature with associated razor blade wounds.

Complex Suicide, Razor Wounds