



General Section – 2007

D60 Suspect Exams in Sexual Assault: How to Catch the Bad Guys

Melodie A. Brooks, BSN, YWCA of Toledo, 1018 Jefferson Avenue, Toledo, OH 43604; and Julie Cox, BS, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, 1616 East Wooster, #18, Bowling Green, OH 43402*

After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to identify the purpose and necessity of suspect exams, the correlation of suspect exams to sexual assault investigations, and the required elements of a suspect kit.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by raising awareness of the necessity for suspect evidence collection when investigating sexual assault cases.

Traditionally evidence collection has focused solely on the victim by specialized forensic examiners negating the fact that valuable trace evidence maybe found on the suspect. The suspect is a crime scene as much as the victim. Although, in many cases, no forensic evidence is found on the victim, evidence collection continues to focus exclusively on the victim. Within the context of a sexual assault kit the type of evidence collected may include clothing, bedding, and stains. These items when collected appropriately and transferred into evidence correctly can place the suspect at the scene of the crime. Other cases may involve digital penetration, oral penetration or the use of condoms in the assault. The type of trace evidence collected from these situations can be the key to success in an investigation and may only contain DNA from the suspect. Many forensic nurse examiner programs have collaborated with municipalities to provide evidence collection on the suspects of these crimes. The evidence collected on suspects can help corroborate a victim's account of events and complete the link between crime scene, victim, and suspect. In contrast, the collection of evidence from a suspect can assist in the individual's exoneration. Suspect exams are not limited to sexual assault cases. In many scenarios, bite marks and fingernail scrapings can prove to be an invaluable source of DNA from the perpetrator of a crime. Furthermore, the suspects clothing can reveal an unrealized source of DNA. The timing of suspect evidence collection is crucial. The evidence on hands, clothing, or body parts can be washed away and lost forever. Juries continue to place demands on the forensic community to provide DNA. Through the development and initiation of suspect exams this demand maybe fulfilled.

Case studies where suspect evidence was pivotal in the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault. Emphasis will be placed on the key elements of correlation between the victim and suspect DNA will be presented. The suspect kit components will be reviewed with significance placed on types of evidence that maybe collected. A sample policy and procedure will be reviewed and available for distribution. In addition, participants will receive a sample consent form for review. The presentation is focused on information required to establish suspect collection.

Suspect Exam, Trace Evidence, Sexual Assault