



K3 Alcohol, Drugs, and Homicide

*Xiang Zhang, MD**, and *Ling Li, MD*, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 111 Penn Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; *Ping Yan, MD*, Department of Forensic Medicine, Wuhan University, Wuhan, Hubei 430072, China; *Barry S. Levine, PhD*, and *David R. Fowler, MD*, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 111 Penn Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the role of alcohol and drug abuse in violent deaths.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing additional support that alcohol and drug users are at greatly increased risk of being victims of homicide.

In the United States, homicide is the third leading cause of death for persons 15-24 years of age and the leading cause of death for black males 15-34 years of age. It has been estimated that one out of ten homicide victims are drug-related.

A retrospective study of homicide victims in the State of Maryland was conducted for 2003, 2004, and 2005 to determine alcohol and/or illicit drugs use among homicide victims. During the past three years, a total of 1,674 homicides occurred in Maryland, with an average rate of 10.1 homicides per 100,000 individuals. Males were six times more likely to become homicide victims (85.7%) than were females (14.3%). Blacks were 5.9 times more likely than whites to be victimized. Black males were at the greatest risk, to become victims. Of homicide victims, 71% (1187/1674) were black males, with an average rate of 53.5 per 100,000 populations.

Comprehensive alcohol and drug testing were performed on all of the homicide victims. Alcohol and/or drugs were found in a significant portion of homicide victims. Of this group, 739 out of 1,674 homicide victims (44%) showed some form of recent illicit drug and/or alcohol use. Alcohol was positive in 33% of the cases. Among illicit drugs, cocaine was the most common drug detected in the homicide victims (15%), followed by Narcotics (6%), Phencyclidine (PCP) (3%), and Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) (1%). More male victims (46%) were positive for alcohol and/or drugs than were female victims (22%). Blacks (45%) were slightly more likely than whites (41%) to be positive for alcohol and/or drugs.

The most common cause of homicide in Maryland was firearm injury (77%), followed by sharp force injury (10%), blunt force injury (8%), suffocation/strangulation (2%). Among victims caused by firearm injury, 34% were positive for alcohol, 10% for cocaine, 7% for narcotics, 4% for PCP, and 1% for MDMA. The victims from sharp force injury were 33% positive for alcohol, 7% for cocaine, 2% for narcotics, and 1% for PCP. Alcohol, cocaine, and narcotics were detected in 25%, 6%, and 6% respectively among victims of blunt force injury, and in 36%, 3%, and 11% respectively among the victims from suffocation/strangulation.

Forensic Toxicology, Drugs, Homicide