



### D49 The Ball's in Your Court: Castration as a Form of Extreme Body Modification in America

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The goal of this presentation is to introduce the forensic community to the world of extreme body modification (EBM), specifically castration, through several case studies.

The presentation will impact the forensic community by providing awareness that an illegal castration attempt may be the possible cause of a patient reporting to medical personnel with bleeding in the groin region.

Every forensic scientist should have at least one out of the ordinary, memorable case. In February 1999, such a case was brought into the Indiana State Police Crime Laboratory serology section in Fort Wayne, IN. This case introduced the unusual world of extreme body modification (EBM). The case involved a man, Edward Bodkin, who was arrested for castrating numerous men in Huntington, Indiana. Bodkin was brought to the attention of police by an ex-roommate, who reported that Edward was performing the castrations on willing men in the kitchen of his apartment. A search of Edward's home yielded 9 glass jars containing what appeared to be human tissue found next to his refrigerator. Knives, other instruments and video tapes of the procedures were also collected. Forensic examination later confirmed that the jars did in fact contain human testicles. A trial was averted when Edward Bodkin admitted to "surgical procedures" practicing medicine without a license.

This case seemed to be an isolated incident until a case in Michigan made the news several years later. In August 2002, a 29-year-old man was arrested for performing a castration on a 48-year-old "willing victim." A pair of severed testicles was found in a plastic storage container in the suspect's refrigerator. The similarities with the Bodkin case made it appear that this procedure was more common than originally thought. One year later, another castration case came to light in Pennsylvania. Since that time, illegal castrations continue to make the news. While none of the participants in these procedures have died, there has been excessive bleeding and injury.

Cursory knowledge of this EBM subculture will enable forensic experts to be more aware of it when it crosses their area of expertise. For example, unusual injuries on a victim may not be the result of attack, but may in fact be a voluntary modification.

A search on the internet has found an entire network of people who alter their bodies for many different reasons. From the simple tattoos and piercings to the removal of body parts, the world of EBM can present itself in many forms. Who are the willing participants in the castration procedure? What makes them want to remove that particular body part? Why would someone risk imprisonment to perform this medical procedure in their kitchen? Why would someone video tape the "surgery?" This paper will discuss these issues as well as delve into the strange world of EBM on the Internet.

**Castration, Extreme Body Modification, Internet**