



D21 Suicide by an Unusual Improvised Firearm

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After attending this presentation, attendees will increase awareness of the spectrum of unusual items that may be employed as an improvised firearm.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by expanding the knowledge of types of items that may be employed as improvised firearms. This knowledge is of importance to police, forensic scene investigators, forensic pathologists, and firearms examiners.

A 38-year-old male was found dead in his automobile in a parking area adjacent to a vehicle salvage business. A soot-covered defect was found in his shirt with an underlying gunshot wound that appeared as a contact entry wound. A wrench socket covered with tape and clamped

in vise-grip pliers was found on the floorboard of the car near his left foot. A fired semi-automatic handgun cartridge was secured in one end of the socket. A claw hammer was also found in the front floorboard of the vehicle.

At autopsy, the subject had an entry gunshot wound over the precordium of his chest. Its appearance was consistent with a contact entry wound through clothing and a corresponding defect was found in the shirt. The "muzzle" imprint surrounding the wound and soot deposit had a hexagonal configuration. The wound track passed through the heart, diaphragm, and stomach, and deviated downward at the posterior left eleventh rib. A large caliber jacketed projectile was recovered from soft tissues of the lower left back; there were no visible land markings on the slightly distorted projectile.

The improvised weapon, with fired cartridge case in place, and the recovered projectile were inspected. The cartridge had been secured in the base of the socket by metal wire inserted in the extractor groove and twisted on each side. This prevented the rimless cartridge from falling into the socket and held it in place firmly enough for more than one blow by the hammer to discharge the round. The projectile itself bore varying striations from interaction with the sides of the socket.

This case presentation is intended to inform medical examiners, death investigators, police investigators, and firearms examiners of the unusual features of unique and improvised firearms.

Improvised Firearm, Standard Tools, Suicide