



Pathology Biology Section – 2009

G120 Sex Killer: Sexually Related Trauma and Deaths - Forensic Aspects

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After attending this presentation, attendees will know the description of potentially dangerous sexual practices and their consequences involving death.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by the knowledge and the awareness of these particular sexual practices and their consequences involving death.

Introduction: Many men and women practice a broad range of voluntary sexual activities, most of which are harmless. Many minor injuries of the genital, oral, and anal areas do occur but most of them only require symptomatic therapy. The only erotic activities with an unacceptable risk for injury are vaginal insufflations during pregnancy, and fist fornication. Some forensic deaths are indirectly linked to sexual activity. Three cases of deaths with unusual fatal mechanisms during sexual activities are reported.

Materials and Methods: Forensic investigations of the crime scene and the autopsy findings of three cases: two women and one man will be presented. Another living woman with important genital lesions provoked by sexual activity was examined by a forensic pathologist and gynecologic doctor. The pelvic and abdominal lesions are described.

Results: In Case 1, a 35-year-old woman was found dead in her bed. The death was attributed to asphyxia by strangulation. At autopsy,

anal and sphincter injuries and massive rectal hemorrhage were seen, due to rectal fist insertion (fisting). Her husband was sentenced for murder by strangulation and sexual assault. Case 2 presents a 42-year-old man was found dead in his car in the driver's seat, his clothes (trousers and underpants) pulled down around his ankles. Police and forensic investigations supposed voluntary sexual practices with a prostitute, such as oral sex. At autopsy, investigators observed an internal thoracic hemorrhage linked to a ruptured aortic aneurysm. The sexual activity brought about the tearing of aortic tissue. Case 3 presents a 48-year-old woman performed voluntary sexual activities such as vaginal and rectal fist and foreign body insertion (alcohol bottle into the base) during heterosexual activity. The surgeons observed haematomas of the vulva, major labia, minor labia, and anal area. A colostomy was performed for the anal sphincter injuries and a surgical act to drain off the haematomas. In Case 4, a 37-year-old woman was found dead in her bed. A large quantity of blood was observed between and over the thighs. Her husband specified that the blood resulted from menstruation. At autopsy, vaginal injuries and massive hemorrhage were observed, due to vaginal fist insertion (fisting). The cause of death was vaginal hemorrhage due to the fisting. Toxicological analysis showed she was drunk. Her husband pretended that she consented to this sexual activity. He was sentenced for sexual assault leading to the death by hemorrhage.

Discussion: Anal and/or vaginal fist or foreign bodies being inserted are uncommon and potentially dangerous sexual practices. Forensic investigations, the autopsy, toxicological and histopathological findings, and the manner and the mechanism of death for three persons will be discussed. The insertion of a clenched hand and forearm into the vagina or rectum during heterosexual activity and indirect performing aortic rupture on pre-existing lesions during oral sex are linked to the cause of death. The frequency of such fatal outcomes or sexual activity of anal and vaginal penetration, the injuries observed, the cause of death due to these acts (exsanguinations by traumatic damage to the canal anal and to the vagina or/and air embolism), the consequences of these practices, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim and the special features at the scene, are discussed and compared to the literature. Indeed, foreign bodies, arm, and forearm inserted into the rectum and the vagina with associated hemorrhage and perforation have been well documented in medical literature. However, death following these acts has very rarely been reported. Such cases remain rare but have to be reported to alert the forensic pathologists, investigators, and coroners. In a larger range, the public must be aware of the role of such sexual activity and their consequences involving death.

Fisting, Hemorrhage, Erotic Death