



F40 Hidden in Plain Sight and All in the Family

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have learned about some unusual death circumstances requiring the services of the forensic odontologist. Some useful tips for securing antemortem dental records will also be provided.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community providing knowledge for future investigations.

Occasionally, investigators have only half of the information needed to complete an investigation. For example, an individual claims to have committed a murder and hidden the body of his victim. Police may charge the individual for his actions, but until the victim's body is recovered and scientifically identified, it may not be proved that a crime has actually occurred. It could be months or years until all the pieces of a case are brought together for proper resolution.

Another example could be a missing person where there is no evidence of foul play. It is difficult to investigate a person who may choose not to be found or may be well concealed by circumstances of death.

The two cases described in this presentation demonstrate the role of the odontologist in the identification of persons who have died in unusual circumstances.

The first case involves a missing young man who either fell or was pushed to his death and remained undetected for some time even though a thorough search of his neighborhood revealed nothing. The ultimate discovery of his remains was not by investigators, but rather someone looking for something else. He was found in a most unusual location, almost a year after his disappearance. This individual was listed with NCIC and featured on *America's Most Wanted*.

The second case involves an alleged crime of murder linked to a family dispute. An abandoned live baby was the first clue to the disappearance of a young woman, yet no remains were discovered until months later even after exhaustive searches of the area where investigators suspected the remains to be. Even though a family member claimed responsibility for the missing person's disappearance, no evidence of murder was found. A very bizarre family situation had emerged from the investigation of this untimely death. This case is particularly interesting because of the difficulty in obtaining antemortem dental records in spite of postmortem evidence of extensive dental treatment. The delay in securing adequate antemortem dental radiographs compelled investigators to employ alternate methods of scientific identification. The difficulties with the antemortem dental record search and the unusual source of records associated with this case will be discussed.

Record Keeping, Death Investigation, Digital Radiography