



Pathology Biology Section – 2010

G116 An Unusual Case of “Piggyback” Sandwiched Projectiles Caused by a Round- Nose Bullet Shot Through a Door

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The goal of this presentation is to reinforce with an unusual example, the concept of intermediate targets and secondary projectiles as they relate to gunshot injuries and in addition, to highlight the importance of correlating scene investigation with autopsy findings.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by reinforcing the concept of secondary projectiles and highlighting the importance of correlating scene investigation with autopsy findings.

The concept of an intermediate target and secondary projectiles causing bodily injuries has been well documented in relation to gunshot wounds. An unusual case is presented in which a round-nose, copper jacketed .40 caliber projectile perforated a foam-filled metal door and carried two disc-like pieces of metal from the inner and outer lining of the door to the victim's body. Autopsy showed a distant type gunshot entry wound to the left front shoulder area and an adjacent superficial laceration, as well as a second small laceration of the left flank. The overlying clothing had corresponding defects from the bullet and fragments. On the adjacent skin and under the clothing, two metallic, essentially circular, concave pieces of thin metal were found. A round-nose, copper jacketed .40 caliber bullet had perforated the spinal cord and was retrieved from the spine. The nose of the bullet was slightly flattened. The two disc-like pieces of metal were very close in diameter to the bullet's diameter and fit nicely on top of each other on the flattened nose of the bullet, having the same, slightly out-of-round shape as the underlying bullet nose. The fragments also had a similar thickness as the metal surfaces on the door. Scene investigation and findings suggested that the man was shot through the door and the bullet carried the two metal discs “piggyback” on its flattened nose toward the victim, then the fragments perforated the clothing causing the small lacerations. Wounds caused by materials from intermediate targets have been well described, but we have found no case reports of piggyback sandwiched fragments carried on a round nose bullet such as we have described. By thoroughly analyzing the scene and the bullet, we were able to determine that the door fragments piggybacked on the bullet's nose to the decedent. Therefore, this case highlights the importance of correlating scene investigation with autopsy findings and shows the benefit of maintaining persistence when trying to explain discovered peculiarities.

Bullet Wounds, Intermediate Targets, Projectiles