



Pathology Biology Section – 2010

G80 Utility of Large Bowel Examination in Medicolegal Death Investigation

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the contribution to medicolegal death investigation of examination of the lumen and mucosal surface of large bowels.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing what additional information can be contributed to medicolegal autopsies by examination of the large bowel.

The mucosal surface of the large intestine is not always directly examined in cases where findings in the bowels are not suspected to be a cause or contributing cause of death. Some pathologists opt to examine the serosal surfaces and palpate the colon while others routinely open all colons during the course of the autopsy. Numerous disease processes such as ischemia, ulceration, colitis or diverticulitis, which may have contributed to death, may be overlooked if the colon is not thoroughly examined. Additionally, the autopsy provides an opportunity for surveillance for colon carcinoma or precancerous lesions. Routine thorough examination of the colon can potentially provide valuable information to the family members of the decedent if a hereditary natural disease is found, and can also provide general epidemiological data on the prevalence of early precancerous lesions in the population younger than the age currently recommended for screening by colonoscopy. To study the utility of opening colons in medicolegal autopsies, we present a series of over 200 colons examined from sets of sequential autopsies performed at our institution. Colons were opened, rinsed of their contents, and examined along their entire length internally and externally. Correlation of findings with decedent's age, sex, and cause and manner of death are presented. The most common pathological finding is diverticulosis, and after examination of over 100 colons in this ongoing study, no carcinomas have been identified.

Colon, Examination, Large Bowel