



Pathology Biology Section – 2010

G93 Suicide by Extraordinarily Numerous Blade Wounds

Dollett T. White, MD, and Leszek Chrostowski, MD, Hillsborough County Medical Examiner Department, 11025 North 46th Street, Tampa, FL 33617*

After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of correlating terminal events, scene investigations, and autopsy findings in determining the manner of death in a multiple stab wound suicide.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by outlining the findings of a case of uncommon method of suicide by multiple stab wounds.

In the absence of any circumstantial information, the autopsy finding of multiple stab wounds ordinarily creates the rebuttable presumption of homicide. Classification of the manner of death always requires integration of the terminal circumstances, scene investigation and autopsy findings. This case illustrates the importance of all three in assigning manner of death.

The decedent was a 42-year-old man with a history of depression, suicidal ideations and an involuntary admission to a behavioral health institution. On the day of his death, neighbors did not see or hear any suspicious activity. He was found dead by his girlfriend on the garage floor of his undisturbed single family home, when she returned from work. The body was lying at the edge of a very large stain of smeared blood on the floor. A large, blood-stained, non-serrated, kitchen knife was on the floor. The wall opposite the bay door had smeared hand marks. The floor below had drops of blood with a pattern of vertical impact. Several bloody footprints were on the floor, and matched the decedent's shoes. The body was in a flexed position, face down on the floor, leaning to the right; numerous stab wounds to the neck, chest and forearms were visible at the scene. The death was deemed of suspicious circumstances by the police.

The autopsy revealed more than fifty four incised and stab wounds. These included Twenty three stab wounds to the right side of the neck, three stab wounds on the anterior aspect of the neck, eight stab wounds on the left side of the neck, nineteen stab wounds on the anterior aspect of the thorax, and one stab wound to the abdomen. The wounds penetrated the pharynx, pericardium, heart, left lung, and the blood vessels of the neck. The left wrist had multiple horizontally oriented superficial cuts. The configuration of wounds, i.e., shape, depth, location, etc., in correlation with the scene findings and circumstances of death indicated that the manner of death was suicide, despite the unusually high number of the injuries, and impressively complex blood stain pattern at the scene.

Multiple stab wounds are possible but not common with suicides. This case demonstrates the importance of correlating terminal events, scene investigations and autopsy findings in determining the manner of death in a multiple stab wound case.

Multiple, Stab Wound, Suicide