



## Pathology Biology Section – 2011

### **G104 Identification of Two Homicide Victims and Linking of Separate Crimes Solved by Radiographic Discovery of a Healed Bullet Wound.**

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The goal of this presentation is to provide details on the investigation, and forensic examination of two separate homicide cases which were solved based on the radiographic discovery of an old healed bullet wound. A primary point of discussion of this presentation will be how the smallest and least suspected piece of evidence can be utilized to solve a difficult case or cases. The importance of detailed forensic anthropological examination in skeletonized or badly decomposed cases will be noted during the presentation.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing present and future forensic investigations insight as to the forensic analysis of decomposed and skeletonized remains so as determine the identity of deceased as well as the possible cause and manner of death. The forensic audience attending the presentation will become more aware of the importance of old healed injuries in the identification process as well as possibly identifying past activities or linking criminal activity.

In the summer of 2006 near Warren, Ohio skeletonized remains of an adult individual were discovered in a heavily vegetated area near a water treatment facility. The remains of the deceased were noted to be without any associated clothing or foot ware. Forensic anthropological

examination of the remains found them to be consistent with that of a Negroid male who was in his fifth decade of life at death. Based on the environmental conditions at the scene and the decompositional state of the remains a postmortem PMI of approximately six to eight months was assigned. The lack of soft tissues, absence of skeletal trauma in addition to the absence of clothing and location of the remains were noted as extremely suspicious by the coroner's pathologist.

Approximately two years passed while the remains of the deceased remained unidentified. In June of 2008, another set of skeletonized remains were discovered near Warren, Ohio. The remains discovered were recovered from several plastic garbage bags that were located along a highway. Each of the garbage bags recovered contained various portions of a highly decomposed body that had been dismembered. Forensic anthropological examination of the dismembered remains revealed them to represent a single individual that of a Negroid male who was in his mid to late twenties at death.

Detailed examination of the remains revealed that the dismemberment had been accomplished with a saw. The sawing dismemberment was noted as unusual as the cuts were made along the longitudinal/sagittal plane of the body. A major portion of the middle and lower vertebral column had been cut longitudinally including a near perfect halving of the sacrum. A single gunshot wound was noted on the skull and considered to be the probable cause of death.

While conducting an examination of the innominates for aging and sexing purposes a very slight and almost unnoticeable small depression was noted along the inferior side of one of the innominates. The slight depression which was adjacent to the inferior side of the sciatic notch at first appeared to represent a simple skeletal anomaly attributed to human skeletal variation. Radiographic examination of the innominate revealed the presence of a fairly intact nine millimeter bullet. The bullet was removed from the innominate utilizing a small craft saw and submitted as evidence of an old healed bullet wound.

The discovery of the old healed bullet wound served as a key lead to the identification of the homicide victim. Identification of the victim led police on an investigation that in turn resulted in the identification of the prior unknown remains discovered near the water treatment facility. Further investigation of this case revealed that the earlier death was also a homicide and led to the arrest of the killer.

**Anthropology, Ballistics, Human Identification**