



F31 Bitemark Analysis in Hungary

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain a clearer understanding of bitemark analysis in Europe as it is becoming more and more an integral and vital part of police investigation work.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness that violent biting happens all over the world despite not gaining the attention it deserves.

Hungary has a long history of bitemark recognition, study, and analysis. The Forensic Institute of Semmelweis University, one of the most traditional and renowned centers of medical education in Europe, undertook the work of bitemark analysis as early as 1904. Medical textbooks make reference to bitemark analysis conducted by Dr. Laszlo Harsanyi in 1968; however, due to the low rate of criminal activity in socialist countries such as Hungary, little attention was given to this topic in the past. Although animal bitemark analysis was conducted frequently, the occurrence of human bitemarks was considered rare or nonexistent.

Beginning in 2008 as a result of an aggressive media campaign, effort and a special educational program aimed at raising awareness among the Hungarian Crime Scene Technicians, the importance of bitemark analysis was brought to light among not only the police force but also the general public resulting in the reporting of several bitemark cases within a short period of time.

The most prominent case occurred in December 2010 in a suburb of Budapest and shocked the Hungarian nation. A two-month-old infant was beaten by her father and then bitten twice to be silenced. The police were called in once the infant was admitted into the hospital twelve days after the initial abuse had taken place. During the initial medical assessment it was apparent that additional abuse had taken place. Since this case involved a “closed population” suspect pool, a forensic odontologist was called in to analyze the dental evidence obtained from both parents of the infant. A thorough examination and analysis of the bitemarks ruled out the mother as a suspect and concluded that the father was the probable offender. The highly individual characteristic of the bites helped strengthen the father’s conviction. The forensic dentist in Hungary involved in this case collaborated closely with his mentor in the United States who offered valuable advice and guidance during this process.

A few weeks later, another case was reported of a child bitten multiple times by a neighbor who was babysitting him while his mother was at work. Soon after this report reached police investigators, an elderly woman attacked in her home was reported to have bitten her attacker in self defense. In both of these cases, bitemark analysis served as strong evidence in the respective criminal investigations.

It is believed that the education of not only the police force and agencies concerned with children and women’s welfare, safety, and protection, but also that of the general public of the significance of bitemark analysis, which will result in an increase of reported cases ultimately serving to protect the general population as well as providing the justice system with critical evidence in solving crime.

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