



Pathology Biology Section - 2012

G34 Two Unusual Cases of Homicide Involving Heterosexual Erotic Hypoxic Games

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain understanding about deaths, occurring after hypoxic heterosexual erotic games. The important points of this presentation are that hypoxic erotic games are rarely seen in forensic pathology and that the hypoxic games prior to death are not necessarily the cause of death.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by improving the knowledge about accidental erotic asphyxia and homicide, involving hypoxic erotic games. Knowledge about injuries associated with eroticism is important for forensic pathologists. The incidence of erotic asphyxiation, occurring after or as a result of hypoxic heterosexual erotic games is low and almost every case is highly individual. It is believed that the actual presentation can contribute to improving the diagnosis and differentiation between self-inflicted, accidental sexual activities, and homicide in cases where hypoxic heterosexual erotic games are involved.

Fatal autoerotic asphyxiation is not uncommon, but deaths due to homicidal attended behavior or after accidental erotic asphyxias involving heterosexual partners are rare. Cases, where the hypoxic games were practiced before or as a part of the homicide are difficult to diagnose due to difficulties in separating features of accidental and inflicted injuries. It is even more difficult to differentiate if the diagnosis of death is due to mechanical asphyxia or non-deadly asphyxia, taking place shortly before the death.

This study addresses two cases of homicidal deaths occurring after or due to asphyxiation during heterosexual erotic games. Both cases were routinely autopsied at the Department of Forensic Medicine University of Aarhus, Denmark. The drug testing was performed at the Department of Forensic Toxicology of University of Aarhus, Denmark.

The main role of forensic pathologists is to give a reasonable hypothesis regarding the cause of death. In the vast majority of cases the asphyxia can easily be diagnosed. The diagnosis of asphyxia is traditionally based on morphologic findings and nonspecific signs, such as ligature marks, fingernail marks, bruises on the neck, petechial hemorrhages, facial congestion, edema, cyanosis, bruises in soft tissue, fracture of hyoid bone, thyroid- and cricoid cartilage. These findings are all characteristic for death caused by asphyxia, but almost in non-deadly asphyxia, taking place shortly before the death. Additionally fractures of hyoid bone, thyroid- and cricoid cartilage can occur after death.

Two cases are presented in order to provide new knowledge and to improve the forensic diagnosis of causes of deaths, occurring after hypoxic erotic games involving heterosexual partners, which are relatively rare events in forensic pathology. The presented cases illustrate that the presence of morphologic signs of asphyxia at autopsy provide evidence of asphyxia shortly before death, but it cannot provide evidence for asphyxia causing the death.

It is realized that even though such complicated cases are highly individual there is some similarity of findings and signs. Since such cases are extremely rare, the collection of knowledge regarding the case history, forensic examination, police investigations, and court records is an important tool, providing an evidence based interpretations of the findings.

Sexual Asphyxia, Death, Homicide