



E60 Issues in Age Estimation in Medicolegal Cases: Our Experiences in a Tertiary Care Hospital in India

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand some of the principles on methods of age estimation, as well as daily dilemmas faced by forensic doctors in India, owing to a huge burden of medico-legal work supplemented with poor or lack of documented evidence for age of an individual. Authenticated birth certificates, school documents when available, are admissible in the courts as proof of age, and are considered to be superior to the age estimated through medical opinion. The courts rely on the medical opinion whenever there is disagreement on the documented evidence for age or in those cases, where they are completely missing. As the age progresses, the estimation of age-range also widens considerably.

The presentation will impact the forensic science community by sensitizing attendees toward the medicolegal issues that arise in determination of a person's age, hoping to convey that the technique is always a multi-disciplinary approach involving clinical, dental and radiological examination, but with individual limitations for each of these criteria.

Identification of the living person and the dead is of paramount importance for variety of reasons in forensic practice. While age estimation of unidentified corpses and skeletons for identification purposes has a long tradition in forensic sciences, age estimation of living persons have formed a relatively recent area of clinical forensic medicine which are becoming increasingly important. Not only it is important in the identification of victims and accused in criminal cases, but also in civil cases like marriage, inheritance of property, insurance claims and missing persons etc where determination of age is questionable.

Durnig day to day practice, it becomes challenging for a forensic doctor to pin-point and accurately comment upon the age of an individual, especially when the court of law needs specific age of either parties for fixing the level of punishment and dispensing the case. This presentation details cases referred from the courts, for age estimation of those in conflict with the law, who were pleading innocence on the grounds of age, stating to be juveniles at the time of committing the offense. Many of the crimes were committed by the accused years earlier and the trial took another set of years to complete, further complicating the issue of age. It was noteworthy, that most of the accused were related to cases of heinous crimes like homicide and wanted to benefit from the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of children) Act of India; 2000. The honorable court then asked for medical opinion, regarding the bone age of the individual through a board of doctors in the tertiary care hospital.

In practice age estimation. it is always a multidisciplinary approach involving clinical, dental, and radiological examination; however, there are individual limitations for each of these criterions. A careful scientific co-relation of various findings present during examination, when interpreted with the available background history will ultimately solve the problem. This preseneation shall share experiences of formulating medical opinion on estimation of age using various parameters, citing discrepancies in the available review of literature and the legal point of view of Indian courts, regarding age estimation popularly known as "ossification test" among jurists in India.

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