



G20 Violence Against Women Victims: Forensic Autopsies Findings in Istanbul

Esra Unal, MD, Sermet Koc, MD, and Volkan Unal, MD, Adli Tip Kurumu, Istanbul, TURKEY; and Gulnaz T. Javan, PhD, Alabama State Univ, 915 S Jackson St, Montgomery, AL 36104*

After attending this presentation, attendees will be familiar with the prevalence of crime against women in Turkey.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing actual data obtained from autopsies performed on victims of violence against women.

Because of a widespread public health problem and a human rights violation, violence against women, and its causes and consequences, carries a particular importance. Violence against women causes women's health deterioration, mutilation, and even death.

Istanbul contains approximately 18% of Turkey's population and is the most important cosmopolitan city in the country. According to statistics from 2006 to 2010 census reports, there are nearly 36 million females living in Turkey. There are 6.5 million females living in Istanbul, and since this cosmopolitan city houses a big portion of Turkey's female population, the result of the study of violent female death can be an indicator for the whole country. This study retrospectively evaluates the results of autopsies performed at Ministry of Justice's Department of Forensic Medicine Mortuary on victims of violence against women for the five year period between 2006 and 2010.

There were 4,165 cases of female deaths out of a total of 20,486 autopsies conducted during this period. The female death cases were categorized as follows: 459 cases of death due to violence against women, 72 cases due to suspicion of murder, and six cases of death not directly related to an act of violence but due to diseases, for total of 537 autopsy cases.

Based on total autopsies (n= 20,486), 2.6% (n=537) of the female deaths were due to violence. Extrapolating these data result in 12.9% of total female deaths being a result of violence against women.

While subjects' age ranged from newborn babies to 90-year-old females, 49.7% of the subjects were women aged 21 – 40. The most frequent violent environment was home, where 51.2% (n = 275) of incidences occurred. Women who suffered violence on the streets were 14.5% (n = 78) of the reported cases. 6.7% of the cases happened at vacant land, while 4.3% of them occurred in buildings. Violence against women in the workplace was 23.3% of the autopsies. The location of one-third of the cases could not be identified.

Although perpetrators of 172 cases were not identified, 20.1% of the violence against women was committed by their spouses. This number increased to 52.3% when we added boyfriends' violence against women. The number of subjects who were killed by family members other than the spouse is 73 (20%). 4.4% of violent individuals were females (n = 16). 10.6% (n = 57) of perpetrators committed suicide after the incident, and only 9.7% (n = 52) turned themselves in to the police station.

76.4% of subjects were found to be dead at the scene, while 15.5% of them died on the way to hospital, and 8.2% died after a period of hospitalization.

According to the autopsy results, death as a result of gunshot wounds (50.1%, n = 269) was identified as the top reason for death, while stab wounds (28.3% (n = 152) took second, and strangulation deaths (8.4%, n = 45) took the third place. Handguns were used in 84% (n = 230) and hunting guns in 13%, n = 35 of deaths. The most common fatal shots were to the head region. Death occurring as a result of stab injuries was determined to be the reason in 172 of the cases, with 42.7% (n = 73) of these deaths due to cuts suffered by victims while defending themselves. Ten cases (2%) were victims of sexual assault, ranging in age between 10 and 83 years old.

Violence against women is gaining more importance in today's world. Although there are several studies showing the extent of violence against women in Turkey, this study is the most comprehensive research on forensic autopsy. Violence against women encompasses a multidisciplinary approach; however, exposing these horrible crimes against women will enable our scientific communities to find a better approach in elimination or reduction of these violent acts.

Women, Violence, Autopsy