



Pathology/Biology Section - 2013

G43 Technical Data of Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide in Turkish Mass Media Between 2008-2011 Through Autopsy Reports

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an idea of technical details of intimate partner homicide-suicide autopsies.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by discussing the procedures of autopsy reporting and autopsy findings in intimate partner homicide-suicide cases through optimal standards.

The term "Homicide-Suicide" (HS) can be defined as "the committing of suicide by the same individual after his/her commitment of a homicide." HS is most frequently seen among intimate partners and, within this scope, is an important part of the sexual violence in society. Besides, violent features of these incidences mostly find a place in mass media. This study is intended to elicit scientifically the technical data, or autopsy findings, of these mass media cases which have been constituting a good "image" of the general "picture" all around the country about Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide (IPHS).

A media monitoring agency has been used with specific keywords to detect all the detectable incidences of IPHS which had found place in mass media between 2008 and 2011 in Turkey. Then, the cases were searched in the Turkish judicial system through the autopsy report archives of forensic medicine units all around Turkey, which are organized in the structure of the Council of Forensic Medicine, a unique official forensic medical expertise institution, as a whole. No matter how long the optimal interval between homicide and suicide is defined, in this study all cases for which "homicide-suicide" term between intimate partners has been used in autopsy reports between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2011, have been accepted as IPHS. Judicial records were evaluated in order to have the autopsy data of the victims. The data collected were analyzed through descriptive statistics and chi-square test with predictive analytics software.

Among 122 IPHS cases, only the autopsy reports of 96 cases could be found. For the remaining 26 cases, the reason for the lack of an autopsy report was either the victim's burial without autopsy through only a death examination report or the autopsy's being performed by another physician (most probably not a forensic medicine specialist) working out of the Council of Forensic Medicine.

According to obtained data, among 96 victims with autopsy reports, only three victims were found to be males. The most frequent method in homicides was determined to be firearm injury (69.7% (n:85) pistol, 18.9% (n:23) shotgun), as the total 89.6% (n:86) of the victims had been killed with a firearm. Lethal lesions were most frequent, as 32.6% (n:28), on the head as a single lesion. There were, in all, 217 injuries resulting from gunshots on 86 victims killed with a firearm, while there were at most 11 injuries per victim with a mean injury number of 2.26 for each victim. When checked according to the features of these injuries, 19.8% (n:17) of the injuries were from contact shots, 10.5% (n:9) were from near contact shots, 20.1% (n:18) were from intermediate range shots, 19.8% (n:17) were from distant shots. Toxicological tests were performed for 75% (n:72) of the 96 victims. Among 72 victims, ethanol was found in 12.5% (n:9).

Among perpetrators' suicides, again the most frequent method of suicides was firearm injury (69.8 % (n:84) pistol, 20.5% (n:25) shotgun) as total 89.6% (n:86) of the perpetrators had committed suicide with a firearm. Lethal wounds were most frequent, as 76% (n:73), on the head as a single wound (with a pistol in 80.8% [n:59], with shotgun in 17.8% (n:13), with falling from a height in 1.4% (n:1). The suicide of the perpetrator was more frequently and statistically significant in the first hour after the homicide, and the method was more frequently and statistically significant with the same homicide method. Toxicological tests were performed for 71.9% (n:69) of the 96 perpetrators; among 69 perpetrators, ethanol was found in 12.5% (n:9) and insecticide was found only in one perpetrator explaining the origin.

Besides the discussion of these technical details above about the nature of injury, the ratio of autopsy in IPHS cases as 96/122 indicates some legislation problems in Turkey in letting other physicians perform autopsies or allowing burial without a forensic medicine specialist's consent, but instead with the assignment coming just from the prosecutor. Quality standards like 99/3 Autopsy Harmonization Standards across Europe or any ISO 17020 execution can help to convert the legislation according to scientific standards of authorization in autopsy performance.

Homicide-Suicide, Intimate Partner, Autopsy