



General Section - 2014

D45 Scenes Are Not What They Seem! A Case Study

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This presentation will education investigators on one's approach to crime scenes and provide a variety of questions that may sort out some confusion and outright false information provided during the early stages of the investigation.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing the opportunity to look at what biases may be brought to a crime scene. The forensic science community, especially pathologists who take into consideration the scene photographs and preliminary circumstances surrounding the event, will appreciate the need for clarity and specificity regarding scenes in order to assist in autopsies. Also, attendees will be able to enhance their investigative knowledge and acquire alternatives to approaching a scene.

The world is changing and becoming more populated with different cultures, mores, and practices. Well, so are crime scenes. People do unimaginable acts on other people and living creatures. Society has become private voyeurs with the increase in crime scene shows and documentary-style programming, such as the ID channel's *Wives with Knives* and Oxygen® Channel's *Snapped*. Harris County, Texas, is but a small part of this world of death and destruction, despite the fact that the total number of deaths each year makes it appear Harris County is near the top nationally with overall deaths.

Harris County has over four million people and autopsies approximately 4,000 cases each year. In 2012, there were 4,041 medicolegal cases reported to the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences; investigators responded to 1,652 scenes. The types of scenes responded to included: residences; office buildings; roadways; vehicles; open fields; and inside containers. Most scenes are consistent with witness statements and/or law enforcement's preliminary investigative reports; however, many are not.

Harris County is a large jurisdiction with active commerce, and crime scenes are becoming more graphic, hidden, and complicated. One aspect of death investigation that has been changing over time is that those scenes are not what they seem. This presentation will outline a scene investigation that started out as a possible sexual assault, breaking and entering, drug abuse, and domestic violence. This scene required trace collection and took a completely different and innocent turn as the autopsy was underway. Scene and autopsy photographs will accompany the presentation.

Crime Scene, Deceiving, Case Study