



D51 Multiple Sharp Force Injury Suicides: Common Features and Suggestions for Differentiation From Homicide Cases

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the typical and atypical features of multiple sharp force suicides in Pennsylvania, as well as be able to apply criteria for differentiation between homicides and suicides.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a general description of multiple sharp force suicides and practical suggestions for determining the manner of death at these rare scenes, with particular attention paid to the perspectives of the homicide investigator, the crime scene investigator, and the crime assessment specialist.

Sharp force suicides are rare, with cases that involve multiple sharp force injuries and/or multiple sharp force weapons composing an even smaller subset of these suicides. Due to the bizarre and sometimes gruesome nature of both the injuries and the immediate crime scene, it is understandable for investigative personnel to suspect the involvement of at least one other individual and to believe they are dealing with a homicide rather than a suicide. Careful attention to the scene, the body, and the gathering of information through interviews and other investigative queries is essential to distinguishing a homicide from a suicide in these cases.

Using four cases from Pennsylvania, this presentation will address typical and atypical features of sharp force and multiple sharp force suicides and the outdated criteria for differentiating the manner of death that have been contradicted in the literature. Central to this presentation is identifying and analyzing the features of these cases that determine how investigative personnel view and approach these scenes, as well as where suggestions for best practices can be made. Additionally, those attending this presentation will be able to see case analyses from the "investigative perspective" regarding forensic indicators of self-inflicted injuries, including blood pattern analysis, location of weapon and injuries, as well as the important background information necessary in these investigations, including medical history, personal history, and family dynamics. This presentation utilizes three multiple sharp force suicide cases that each exhibit both typical and atypical features, as well as a multiple sharp force homicide case that, upon cursory assessment, appears to have similar features to the three suicide cases. This presentation utilizes a multiple case study format to provide a holistic understanding of multiple sharp force suicides in an effort to aid others in the forensic community in making a correct determination of the manner of death in these case types.

Suicide, Multiple Sharp Force Injuries, Crime Assessment