



D91 Manners of Death in Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

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The goals of this presentation are to: (1) observe different relationships of domestic violence; (2) review findings of death investigations; (3) compare findings at scene with those at autopsy; (4) discuss various manners of death associated with the perpetrators of domestic violence; and, (5) determine recurring patterns of fatality and harm that arise from domestic violence.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by discussing how professionals involved in the investigation and management of domestic violence can be aware of the substantial risk of harm, including death, that a perpetrator does not expect but may face as a result of his/her acts. The information collected at the death scene, including photography, witness statements, prior domestic violence history, and the written narrative by the death investigator, will be important information later to Domestic Violence Review Teams in identifying risk factors and implementing intervention and prevention programs.

Hypothesis: Domestic violence can have fatal consequences to the perpetrator as well as the victim, resulting in three different manners of death including homicide, suicide, and accident.

Content and Methods: Cases from the Jackson County Medical Examiner's Office during 2009-2011 were reviewed. Investigator reports that indicated a history of domestic violence were analyzed. The consequences of domestic violence on the perpetrators were sought, particularly regarding injury or death that may have been related to the incident that brought the domestic situation to the medical examiner's attention. Four cases were found in which the perpetrator became a fatality as a result of active or recent domestic violence.

Results: One case was a classic homicide-suicide, in which the husband perpetrator killed his victim wife, and then shot himself. A second case was a suicide, in which the wife perpetrator hanged herself in order to avoid a court date with anticipated consequences for her previous acts. Third was a case in which the manner of death was an accident, where the long-term male companion perpetrator died from excited delirium syndrome related to heavy alcohol intake and vigorous resistance to police detention when they responded to a call for help because of active domestic violence from his victim girlfriend. The fourth and final case occurred over several days and involved three homicide victims and eventually ended with the perpetrator being shot by police. The male subject had killed one woman, a suspected drug-dealer companion of his, before returning home and, for some unknown reason, killing his sleeping wife and goddaughter. When confronted by police, the perpetrator fired shots at the police, who returned fire. The manner was ruled as homicide.

Conclusion: Domestic violence can be as lethal to the perpetrator as the intended victim. The medical examiner has a substantial role in investigating, documenting, and reporting these fatalities. Circumstances resulting in death of the perpetrator may include homicide, suicide, and accident as manners of death.

Forensic Pathology, Forensic Science, Violence