



# Jurisprudence Section - 2015

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## **F15 Three Shots to the Head: A Case Study of a Murder Prosecution in Indiana**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of collecting and analyzing forensic evidence present at a murder scene and the importance of the forensic evidence used by the prosecutor in the eventual prosecution against the accused.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a case example of the importance of collecting forensic evidence by law enforcement officers, the processing of that evidence, and explaining the results of the analysis to ensure that the prosecutor's case is sound. In addition, it will demonstrate how important it is to utilize multiple forensic science disciplines to corroborate the theory of the prosecution's case. The case example will illustrate how vital it is for the prosecutor to have a firm understanding of the science in order to comprehend the implications of the forensic scientists' conclusions.

The primary goal of this presentation is to present a case study of a homicide prosecution in a rural county in Indiana. In this particular case study, law enforcement officers responded to a call from a young woman who reported that her brother had been shot. When law enforcement arrived, the victim was found lying dead on his bed with a wound to his head. The officers moved the body to see if medical attention could be rendered and to try to locate a weapon. When no firearm was located, the officers contacted a crime scene technician and began processing the scene as a homicide. Emphasis was placed on how the body was positioned when the sister and the first responding officer initially entered the bedroom. The crime scene technician arrived and processed the scene, collecting forensic evidence for analysis, specifically photographs of blood spatter patterns on the wall and the bedding with which the individual was covered. Law enforcement officers continued the investigation of the crime by questioning friends and relatives. In addition, an autopsy was performed and it was concluded that the victim had been shot in the head three times. In addition, toxicology results revealed the victim tested positive for various chemical substances in his body. Also, law enforcement officers located a firearm believed to be the murder weapon. Subsequently, a firearm examiner performed bullet comparison tests to determine if this was the murder weapon. The weapon that was used in the crime was a .22 caliber single-shot bolt-action rifle, which required the manual placing of a cartridge into the chamber for each shot. Law enforcement officers identified a person as the murder suspect. He was arrested, but claimed self-defense; however, based on the conclusions derived from the toxicology results, the blood spatter patterns, and the operating mechanism of the firearm, this claim was definitely not plausible.

With the corroborating forensic evidence from several forensic science disciplines, the prosecution was able to refute the claim of self-defense, which resulted in the accused pleading guilty to the murder.

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### **Criminal Justice, Evidence Collection, Case Study**