



Odontology Section - 2015

G28 Dental Identification of the 2008 Peruvian Andes Helicopter Crash Victims

Roy H. Sonkin, DDS, 45 Eagle Chase, Woodbury, NY 11797; and Richard M. Weledniger, DDS, 931 Walt Whitman Road, Melville, NY 11747-2297*

After attending this presentation, attendees will understand two of the techniques used in the identification process of a decedent.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the importance of proper protocols used in the identification process to assure reliable results.

This presentation will provide an overview of the efforts made in the recovery and identification process of the victims of the 2008 *Rio Tinto Copper Mine* helicopter crash in the Peruvian Andes Mountains and will demonstrate the use of death mask reconstruction and established forensic odontologic protocols.

All too often, recovery efforts can be challenging due to environmental factors including weather, terrain, and lack of manpower. This unfortunate disaster occurred in a nearly inaccessible mountain range, in heavy weather requiring the use of specialized forces to recover remains. These factors will be discussed and the value of precise antemortem records and their interpretation will be presented. Additionally, this presentation will discuss the difficulty encountered when instrumentation and technology are limited.

The discussion will stress the importance of understanding other cultures and their impact on the identification process. This presentation will also demonstrate the need for those of lesser forensic experience to be given the guidance and knowledge necessary to perform a proper forensic dental identification — this includes understanding the value of separating and labeling personal effects to minimize commingling and, in so doing, potentially facilitate the identification process. Emphasis will be placed on the necessity of “guest” odontologists to conform to the protocols of the “host” while gently introducing techniques that as yet may be unfamiliar and, by doing so, advancing the level of knowledge and ability of all, in an effort to reach positive outcomes.

The interaction between forensic professionals and the importance of mutual respect will be discussed as it applies to sharing of ideas and techniques that may be foreign to non-dental investigators. Additionally, attendees will come to understand the necessity for modifying protocols and demonstrating flexibility when called upon to act as a forensic odontologist rendering proper identifications in a difficult environment.

Forensic Odontology, Unidentified Persons, Helicopter Crash