



Odontology Section - 2015

G33 Two Teens, Midnight, and a Porsche® Carrera® — What Could Go Wrong?

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The goal of this presentation is to discuss the importance of complete dental records being submitted for an identification.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by educating both the odontology community as well as fellow forensic scientists as to why complete antemortem records are requested before beginning an identification.

In the summer of 2010, two 17-year-old males were returning to their home in the suburbs of Chicago around 11:30 p.m. in a Porsche® Carrera® titled in the driver's name. They were traveling at a high rate of speed (estimated at 100+mph) and sideswiped a Dodge® minivan along Interstate 88 near Winfield, IL. Fortunately for the van's passengers, the van driver was experienced and able to maintain control of his vehicle. Unfortunately, the young driver was not able to do so; his vehicle spun out of control on the toll road, ran up a concrete embankment supporting an overpass, and flipped several times before stopping and bursting into flames.

Illinois State Police and Fire Rescue from Winfield, IL, responded, but all they could do was extinguish the fire and recover two young male bodies. The body of the owner was rapidly identified via excellent dental records from the young man's orthodontist. Intraoral photos, a cephalogram, and panoramic X-ray all compared favorably with the postmortem dental examination; however, identification of the second victim was problematic. There were a number of discrepancies between the written records, the antemortem X-rays, and the postmortem findings. It was clear to the investigator that while human error in charting was a possibility, the more likely answer was overbilling of procedures to the young man's parent. Fortunately, it was possible to make a positive identification based on the objective dental X-ray evidence. Had no antemortem X-rays been available, the identification would have had to wait for fingerprint or DNA comparison. In this situation, a delay or exclusion based on the written dental record alone would have had serious ramifications because the young friends' faith stipulates burial within 24 hours. The investigator contacted the treating dentist in the process of the investigation and suggested that perhaps better record keeping was in order.

Radiographs, Odontogram, Dental Treatment Narrative