



G37 A Case for the Records — The Importance of Antemortem Records in Making a Positive Dental Identification

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the need for patience as antemortem records come into the medical examiner's office. Attendees will be able to sort out what information is key to the identification and what information helps to support the identification, while not actually being exemplars.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing attendees with an appreciation of the need for complete antemortem records in a dental identification. Attendees will also appreciate the need for good documentation of treatments performed on patients and the role these documents play in dental identification.

This presentation will use a case study to demonstrate how important each piece of information that is provided to the medical examiner is in clarifying what appeared to be a major inconsistency between the decedent's antemortem and postmortem records. The net result is that it is the combination of all of the antemortem records provided, though they came from different sources and at different times in the investigation, that helped to explain the inconsistency between the postmortem dental and radiographic examinations completed at the Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) and the digitally transmitted antemortem radiographs initially provided by the decedent's dentist, which helped to make a positive dental identification possible in this case.

An interesting part of both the antemortem and postmortem records in this case was a personal effect found with the remains that was very tempting to use as a part of the evidence in the identification. Despite the temptation to use this personal effect in the identification, the personal effect was an object, not unique to the decedent, nor an actual part of the remains. Therefore, the personal effect should not be used as an exemplar in the scientific identification process, but may possibly play a supporting role of adding consistency with the antemortem and postmortem records, although on its own it adds nothing to the actual identification.

This case verifies that antemortem information drives dental identification. Recordkeeping, whether written or radiographic, from the decedent's primary caregiver or from a one-time treatment by a specialist, is extremely important in helping to make a positive dental identification. All records should be conveyed to the MEO when the primary caregiver is presented with a subpoena *duces tecum* by the MEO.

Identification, Records, Concurrence