



H67 **Atypical Self-Strangulation Through a Sphygmomanometer: An Uncommon Suicide Method**

*Sara Lo Pinto, MD**, University of Genova, Via de Toni 12, Genova 16132, ITALY; *Tiziana Tacchella, MD*, University of Genova, Via de Toni 12, Genova 16132, ITALY; *Francesca Fossati, MD*, Via de Toni 12, Genova 16132, ITALY; *Alessandro Bonsignore, MD*, University of Genova, Dept of Legal & Forensic Med, Via de Toni 12, Genova 16132, ITALY; and *Francesco Ventura, MD*, via de Toni, 12, Genova 16132, ITALY

The goal of this presentation is to share the exceptional nature of the presented case which suggests taking sphygmomanometers into consideration as possible tools to perform self-strangulation. At the same time, it emphasizes the importance of the management of psychiatric patients and patient, whether psychiatric or not, with cognitive disorders; indeed, particular caution is required in order to keep them at a safe distance from objects that although apparently harmless, can become lethal.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting an unusual form of suicide performed by a young Italian man with a standard mercury sphygmomanometer, a manner of death previously not described in the reviewed literature.

A forensic approach by means of scene investigation, circumstantial data collection, autopsy, and toxicological investigation led to the conclusion that the cause of death was a mechanical asphyxia, ascribed to self-strangulation by an atypical item. The analysis of blood and urine excluded the presence of alcohol, amphetamine-methamphetamine, MDMA, barbiturates, THC, cocaine, opiates, methadone, and benzodiazepines.

Italy's National Institute of Statistics data for the period 1993-2009 suggest that hanging and other forms of asphyxia are the most common methods of suicide among men (52.1%), while for women asphyxia only represents the second cause of suicide (33.4%), with falls from height being the first (35.1%). Moreover, these official data also show that suicides most often occur in people over 45 years of age.

World Health Organization data confirms that suicide among young people is rare; however, in recent years, the trend has been increasing, especially in developing countries, with globalization-related changes in work practices and stress suggested as the possible causes of identity loss.

In the presented case, a 16-year-old male was discovered lifeless and seated on his bed by his mother (a nurse). The victim had suffered from Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Syndrome and was supported by personal teachers. He had a solitary and depressed character and had recently spent considerable time visiting satanic websites.

One day, after coming home from school while his parents were temporarily absent, he stole his mother's sphygmomanometer and strangled himself.

A thorough analysis of the literature reveals several cases of strangulation mainly related to accidents or homicides (e.g., deaths from life-threatening sexual practices; a peculiar case of a thief trapped between automatic sliding doors during a bungled attempt to enter a supermarket during the night; a victim of the well-known Isadora Duncan syndrome; strangulation by a scarf caught in the moving wheel spokes of a vehicle; choking by a rope passed around the victim's wrists, ankles, and throat (as a typical Mafia homicide); and so on). Other researchers describe uncommon suicidal strangulation methods (e.g., nylon rope around the neck and tied to the right ankle to prevent the rope from untying; a walking stick utilized with a tourniquet effect).

The use of a sphygmomanometer for this purpose is even rarer as it requires the repetition of the action to inflate the cuff around the neck with a progressive asphyxial mechanism and the onset of symptoms connected to this action.

Uncommon Suicide, Self-Strangulation, Sphygmomanometer