



E46 Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID) in North Central Indiana — A Comprehensive Look at Infant Deaths in Indiana

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the frequency of SUID deaths in Tippecanoe County, IN, from 2010 to 2015. Attendees will also be informed as to circumstances of these deaths, including decedent's age, medical history, postmortem autopsy results, toxicology results, and other factors, which were considered to have contributed to the death.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how the mystery of SUID continues to be a perplexing issue for the forensic medical and death investigator community. In addition, the topic of co-sleeping, or bed-sharing, has become a "hot-button" issue in recent years. Advocates for and against this practice are passionate in the apparent benefits and dangers associated with sleeping with an infant. Numerous tragic cases of such deaths have occurred in the Tippecanoe County community in recent years.

Added to this conflict is a category of SUID, the phenomenon of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), in which seemingly healthy infants die and, through a process of exclusion, are labeled as SIDS deaths.

Tippecanoe County is located in north central Indiana, 124 miles southeast of Chicago, and 68 miles northwest of Indianapolis. It is home to Lafayette, IN, and West Lafayette, IN, numerous manufacturing industries, and a major research university. This wide range of opportunity allows for a very diverse population of more than 177,000. This community has experienced numerous SUID deaths since 2010.

The results of these death investigations will be presented, including: demographics of the deceased, demographics of the family involved, recent medical history of the deceased, and autopsy results. The type of SUID death (i.e., SIDS, Unknown, or Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in bed) will be displayed. If co-sleeping was found to be a possible contributing factor, the relationship of the person sleeping with the infant at the time of death will also be discussed. The decision toward, and challenges to, any subsequent criminal charges will also be disclosed.

The location of the event will also be identified, such as in a bed, couch, chair, etc. Recent data suggests that co-sleeping on a couch, or even just outside of a bed, is even more dangerous. Any indication of child abuse, family history of SIDS, or other infant sleeping deaths within the family will also be of interest.

The heartbreaking nature of these deaths leaves many questions yet to be answered. The goal of this presentation is to foster awareness among the forensic community, in the hopes that trends, if any, can be identified.

SUID Death, SIDS, Investigation