

### E67 Investigation of a Mummification-Type Bondage Death

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand an unusual case of bondage that presented as a possible homicide.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing insight into a type of bondage known as mummification.

A 27-year-old White male was found dead on the floor of his apartment bedroom. The decedent was bound in duct tape from the mouth to the ankles. The apartment door and all the windows were locked. Duct tape was applied in organized rows, and several of the ends of the tape were placed at the decedent's back, which led to the preliminary conclusion that the tape could not have been self-applied. The tape was wrapped from just below the nose to the neck. A second application of tape started at the shoulders and continued to the hips. The final application of tape started at the upper thighs and ended at the ankles. The ankles were also bound under the tape by a red rope. The tape around the hip area had been torn slightly in a few places, prompting the initial theory of a second person's involvement. Assessment of rigor mortis and livor mortis at the scene was not possible due to the extensive coverage of the body by the duct tape.

At autopsy, the tape was carefully cut away to reveal a black nylon body suit and a black spandex undergarment, to which the duct tape adhered. There was no direct contact of tape to skin. Tape application was performed in a meticulous, organized pattern. The decedent was also wearing a diaper that was full of feces. Boxes of adult diapers were found in a closet in the decedent's apartment. Duct tape covered the decedent's mouth. A ball gag was found in the decedent's mouth and behind that was a bandana, tied in knots. The bandana was saturated with saliva which caused it to expand in size.

Postmortem toxicology of blood and urine was negative for alcohol and drugs. Cause of death was certified as "asphyxia due to obstruction of the upper airway and restriction of chest wall movement." Manner of death was left pending until the police concluded their investigation, which included checking credit card purchases, viewing video from store surveillance cameras, and interviewing the boyfriend of the decedent, who lived out of state.

A review of internet sites identified duct tape bondage as mummification and described various ways in which it can be achieved. Most sites gave warnings about the danger of asphyxiating and purported to give advice on how it can be accomplished safely. Several writers shared near death experiences when engaging in this type of activity.

#### **Mummification, Bondage, Duct Tape**