



### H126 Sexual Assaults in Geneva, Switzerland, 2006-2012: Forensic Doctor Usefulness

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the main forensic observations noted in cases of sexual assaults in Geneva throughout the 2006-2012 period and the usefulness of the forensic doctor.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, in particular between forensic doctors and gynecologists.

Currently, it is recognized that sexual assaults take on medical importance (physical and psychological) as much as legal and social importance with frequently dramatic long-term consequences for the victims (increase of cardiovascular risks and risk-taking behaviors, such as extreme sports, alcoholism, or smoking).

According to the literature, one woman in six falls victim to sexually-connotative assault throughout her lifetime and one in ten will be victim of rape at least once. This is why quality of care is essential as it allows for the reduction of post-traumatic stress and encourages an increasing number of victims to come forward, as has been the case in Geneva for several years. An increase in the number of cases, from approximately 20 per year in the late 1990s to approximately 100 per year at present was actually noted. Because of this, it was decided to create a protocol, with a rape kit, in order for each victim to be treated in an identical way, by both a gynecologist and a forensic doctor, who can both be consulted during the day, throughout the night, or on public holidays.

The epidemiological studies conducted in both Europe and the United States agree on the fact that the number of victims asking for help is on a constant rise. This is why care dispensed by trained professionals, in particular psychiatrists and psychologists, is systematically proposed to the victims the day after their emergency consultation.

Women who consult after having been sexually assaulted often do so for therapeutic reasons, namely for wound disinfection, detection (and treatment) of sexually transmitted diseases, and for the prevention of non-desired pregnancies. In the majority of cases, they do not file charges and the role of the forensic doctor becomes secondary; however, some victims consult with the goal of discovering evidence (in particular DNA) that would help identify the perpetrator. In this case, the role of the forensic doctor becomes essential. He/she must describe precisely and in detail all observations (bruises, wounds, dermabrasions, bites, etc.) made on the entire body. He/she must ensure that all samples that can be used as evidence are indeed collected (blood, sperm, saliva, clothing, etc.) in search of the offender's DNA. Blood and urine samples must also be taken for eventual toxicological analyses.

Finally, the forensic doctor will need to obtain the victim's consent, whether a complaint has been lodged or not, which will allow him/her to pass on relevant information to the authorities (prosecutor, judge, police). Pictures, also with the victim's consent, will be taken of the face and the body.

Two documents are immediately handed to the victim. The first consists of general information regarding global coverage with, if needed, different telephone numbers. The second consists of a temporary medical attestation containing the main findings, which is useful if the patient wishes to file a complaint.

In conclusion, this study illustrates the different socio-demographic characteristics of the victims, such as age, the location of the assault, the relationship with the aggressor, the number of aggressors, the time of the assault, the time elapsed between the assault and the consultation, as well as other characteristics, such as the results of



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toxicological analyses, the severity of the injuries observed, and the elements that lead a woman victim of sexual assault to lodge a complaint.

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### **Sexual Assaults, Geneva, Switzerland**