



H73 A Singular Case of Suicide Committed With a Homemade Firearm

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The goal of this presentation is to emphasize how a detailed analysis of the crime scene as well as a very careful external examination of the corpse can shed light on the manner of death in a suicide case involving an unusual homemade firearm.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by explaining how a person can create an effective firearm that is capable of killing, using simple materials that are easily bought in any hardware store and requiring only a minimal manual ability.

Shotguns are used in a large number of homicides and suicides, and gunshot wounds are widely reported in the literature. This particular case showcases circumstances and pathological findings that concluded in suicide with an unusual homemade firearm.

Reported is a case of a 50-year-old man found at the wheel of his car in a field. A forensic pathologist at the crime scene noticed an odd tool on the front passenger seat. This object was made of two different caliber scaffolding pipes; the thinner one was inserted into the larger, so one could glide inside the other. The latter was closed by a screw partially pivoted on a bolt. The thinner tube had open ends and the external tube was stained with blood. Each scaffolding pipe had a grip consisting of another shorter tube. Upon disassembling the weapon, a 12-gauge exploded cartridge was found in the large tube. Inside the car were bloodstains on the headliner, corresponding to the head and on the steering wheel were impact bloodstains. In addition, during the crime scene investigation, a 12-gauge unexploded cartridge was found in one of the jacket pockets of the dead man. After removing the body from the car with the approval of the prosecuting officer, abundant dried blood was found on driver's seat. At the external examination, on the left hemithorax between the first and the third intercostal space along the mid-clavicular line was a large blackish 10cm x 7.5cm stain from a round wound that was 3cm in diameter. This wound was inscribed in a grazed concentric blackish-brown area and was 4.5cm in diameter. The body exhibited no other wounds.

After having examined all the weapon components, as well as the analysis of the death scene, the functioning mechanism was understood, allowing the recreation of events: the man charged the larger pipe with the 12-gauge cartridge and glided the thinner pipe into the larger one; the screw acted as the firing pin and the bullets hit his right hemithorax.

All these scientific results demonstrated that the suicide was certainly premeditated and was, in the end, lucidly executed. This odd firearm had probably been tested and previously perfected, bearing in mind the close attention to details. Information gathered from the death scene was crucial in providing the precise sequence of events.

Suicide, Homemade Firearm, Shotgun