G42 Back to Nice — July 2016: The Dental Identification Team's Role in the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Mission of the Terrorist Truck Attack in France

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how the French Forensic Team identified the victims killed by the terrorist truck attack on July 14, 2016, in Nice, France, and what outcomes were found in terms of forensic odontology.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the method used and the new organizational procedures conducted over three days to identify the 86 victims of 16 different nationalities on a public holiday in Nice, France.

On the evening of July 14, 2016, a 19-ton truck smashed into a packed crowd of people gathered to celebrate Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais, the famous seaside walk in the French Riviera city of Nice, France. This attack was claimed by ISIS. In this case, the terrorist killed 83 people and injured more than 400 people before being shot dead by the police. After a few days, three more victims died of their wounds. In this terrorist attack, a total of 86 victims were killed, including 17 children and 24 foreign victims of 16 different nationalities.

Emergency measures were immediately instituted, employing two separate protocols: the first was dedicated to the identification process with a Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) procedure, while the second was focused on the autopsy. A well-staffed forensic odontology team was immediately set up, including ten French odontologists from all over the country. For three days, the odontologists worked non-stop, with two teams working in parallel.

The dental Antemortem (AM) team worked within the global AM cell, in close collaboration with the French Forensic Police, the National Gendarmerie within the Unité Nationale d'Identification des Victimes de Catastrophe (UNIVC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and other independent forensic experts. These teams collected antemortem data of missing people in a facility located in the city center of Nice, accommodating an exceptional venue to investigate, interview, and support the victims' families.

The dental postmortem team worked non-stop in the Forensic Institute of Nice in pairs examining decedents to improve the accuracy of the records and reduce the risk of error due to operator fatigue. This team also examined the unconscious and unknown victims' dentition in the intensive care department of Nice hospital.

Both antemortem and postmortem teams used INTERPOL forms to record data. The two teams worked together to compare and establish the identification of victims based on the dental records of missing people and unknown deceased victims.

Every day, one to two identification commissions, including forensic experts, were organized as new matches were found. Among these experts, one dentist was present in each commission to submit the dental findings. A total of six commissions took place, allowing the identification of all dead and unconscious victims.

The excellent outcomes found during the identification of the victims in Nice reflected the efficient collaboration between the different sections of the DVI unit and the forensic odontology team. The dental identification process played an important role in this organization.

The method and outcomes of this identification process will be explained in this presentation. The difficulties and means implemented to counteract these problems will also be highlighted.

Disaster Victim Identification, Terrorist Attack, Forensic Odontology