



W18 Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Deaths

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the biomechanics of accelerative/blunt force injury in infants and children; the dynamics of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy; multiple descriptions of child interview techniques; psychological analysis, which can be conducted in child death investigations; and the Fatality Review Board (FRB) process within the United States Department of Defense. This session will also include homicide presentations by special agents and crime scene investigators who process domestic violence and child abuse death crime scenes.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing insight into the many disciplines utilized in domestic violence deaths. The presentations will leave a lasting impact on attendees through the intricate details of each topic, discussing the criminal, physiological, and psychological aspects of domestic violence.

A group of psychologists, a forensic pathologist, and forensic science special agents, all bringing decades of forensic science and federal law enforcement experience, will present technical material pertaining to Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, child interviews, accelerative/blunt force trauma, and psychological analysis used in solving domestic violence investigations. This group will present an FRB process that brings together subject matter experts and leaders to reduce the number of deaths in a community using a multi-modal approach. Special agents will provide three separate case presentations of domestic violence deaths they investigated, sharing their insight of the forensic science process in domestic violence homicides.

Features of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (now referred to as Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*) will be described. Typical case findings will be discussed, along with offender psychological characteristics and implications for investigation and interview strategies. Illustrative examples will also be used from past cases.

A case presentation from a 2013 child death involving a 14-month-old male murdered while in the care of his grandmother will be reviewed. The boy, born from an incestuous relationship between the subject's daughter and husband, became a victim of the subject's anger. The initial autopsy report listed the cause and manner of death as undetermined and the case grew cold; however, 18 months after the child's death, the case was renewed by investigators, resulting in the manner of death changing to homicide and prison time for subject.

A history of child interviews and research conducted in the past 30 years will also be discussed. This segment will explore the type and value of open-ended questions and the amount of information gained when compared to traditional direct questions, and elements that are necessary in all structured child interviews will be discussed.

The Army FRB will then be presented. The FRB conducts a review of all domestic violence and child abuse deaths in order to establish trends or patterns that may help in formulating training or preventative methods for the future. An overview of recent trends in regard to child abuse deaths will also be provided, as will recommendations, then the importance of utilizing the results of FRBs in order to establish processes and training that help in the reduction of these types of deaths will be examined.

The biomechanics of accelerative and blunt force injuries in infants and children will be discussed, with a focus on head and neck injury. Landmark articles and "controversies" over the past several decades will be discussed. Additionally, the classification of a death as Sudden Unexplained Infant Death and the necessary documentation will be reviewed.

Next, the response by special agents to a suspected double homicide and suicide will be presented. The subject was a spouse of a service member and the mother of the two victims, ages 3 and 18 months. In the weeks leading up to the deaths, the subject was observed exhibiting increasingly erratic behavior, incoherent conversations, and religious paranoia. Investigators utilized scene reconstruction to replace displaced items as well as to conduct a bloodstain pattern analysis and shooting incident reconstruction.

The final case review details a 28-day-old infant death. The topics discussed will include a review of the mother's pre-incident behaviors, all circumstantial evidence pertaining to the case, analysis of the 911 call, video reenactment, and post-incident behaviors.

Child, Violence, Death