



G25 Helpful Hints for a Variety of Dental Autopsy Situations and a Compilation of “Interesting” Cases

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will have viewed a number of forensic dental identification cases, have a better understanding of methods to manage a variety of dental autopsy situations, and have viewed a selection of interesting cases. Helpful hints and methods indicated for a wide variety of dental autopsy situations, body conditions, and dental evidence will be presented through a storytelling format. Additionally, a compilation of “interesting” cases will be presented to demonstrate the types of cases a forensic dentist may be asked to consult on, and knowledge to help make the decision on whether or not to accept each “interesting” case.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing information that will help provide budding forensic dentists with tools to aid their community by enhancing their readiness to serve as a consultant in dental identification cases.

The dental autopsy cases to be presented will also demonstrate the variety of “Degrees of Certainty” in dental identification cases. Positive Identification cases will be presented in which the antemortem and postmortem data match in sufficient detail to establish that they are from the same individual, within a reasonable dental probability, and there are no irreconcilable discrepancies. Insufficient Evidence cases will be viewed in which the available information, antemortem or postmortem, is insufficient to form the basis for a conclusion. Unidentified cases will be presented that demonstrate that, in some instances, there is no antemortem evidence or insufficient evidence to perform a dental comparison. Exclusion cases will demonstrate that, at times, the antemortem and postmortem data are clearly inconsistent.

Medical examiner and coroner offices often request the expertise of a forensic dental consultant to achieve the positive scientific identification that is necessary for the issuance of a death certificate. The death certificate in turn facilitates the funeral arrangements, burial or cremation of the individual, life insurance benefits, social security benefits, disposition of instructions in the decedent’s last will and testament, and matters of inheritance.

This presentation will prepare those who are in the early stages of experiencing or performing actual dental autopsies with information about situations they may encounter. Attendees will learn processes to facilitate their success as Forensic Dental Consultants. Additionally addressed during the session will be the topics of professionalism and collegiality with other forensic professionals interacted with on dental identification cases, as appropriate for the cases presented during the session.

Some of the topics to be addressed include: the recently deceased, skeletal remains, charred remains, incinerated remains, mangled remains, beaten remains, blunt force trauma remains, gunshot-to-the-head remains, decomposing remains, fragmented remains, dental evidence found at the scene that could belong to either the assailant or the victim, dental identification issues in removable prosthetics, and orthodontic evidence.

Forensic Science, Forensic Odontology, Dental Identification