



### H152 A Tale of Two Recreational Mummification Bondage Cases: Undetermined Versus Homicide

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the importance of scene investigation in certifying deaths related to recreational mummification bondage.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by emphasizing the importance of a thorough scene investigation with implications on the manner of death certified in recreational mummification bondage-related deaths.

**Case 1:** A 48-year-old man experienced in bondage sessions and body wraps was found in a residential basement converted to a Bondage & Discipline, Dominance & Submission, Sadism & Masochism (BDSM) -style dungeon after his partner realized he was not responding appropriately. The decedent and partner had known each other for seven months and had regular bondage sessions at the location, the last session two weeks prior to death. According to the partner, the decedent was covered from head to toe by plastic wrap and gaffer's tape with small breathing holes at the mouth and nose. At the scene investigation, the decedent was found nude, supine, with a locked metal chain around his neck, and a penile chastity cage. A trash can in the corner of the room contained plastic wrap and red gaffer's tape that the partner had removed once the decedent was unresponsive. In this instance, video and photos of prior events were not collected into evidence, and reportedly there were no videos or photographs of the event in question. Injuries seen at autopsy included contusions and edema of the genitals, consistent with the male chastity belt, and superficial erythematous horizontal lines on the lower extremities, consistent with the description of being wrapped in plastic and tape. Mild pulmonary congestion and edema were present, and no significant natural disease was seen anatomically. Toxicology studies revealed a low (11mcg/mL) concentration of Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB) in the decedent's blood. Both the GHB, a respiratory depressant, and the restriction of the chest caused by mummification were thought to contribute to an increased risk for respiratory distress. The cause of death was sudden death during recreational mummification bondage due to an undetermined cause after autopsy and toxicologic analysis, and the manner was undetermined.

**Case 2:** A 27-year-old woman was found unresponsive in a hotel room; cellophane, white duct tape, and pink duct tape were in a trash can in the room. Four videos showing the encounter from varying angles were recovered at the scene, depicting the suspect wrapping and striking the decedent; only the decedent's breasts and nose were exposed. The video shows the suspect occlude the decedent's exposed nose, at which time she begins markedly struggling against the restraining tape. The woman becomes unconscious but remains alive, until the suspect removes the tape from the waist down and begins sexual intercourse. After a total elapsed occlusion time of approximately 17 minutes, the man removes the tape from the cyanotic nose, releasing tan-brown fluid from the nares. At autopsy, there were abrasions of the face, neck, left breast, and left thigh; contusions and petechiae of the right and left breasts with patterned contusions of the left breast. Internally, there were scalp contusions and hemorrhages in the neck muscles, though there was no fatal blunt trauma. There was complete occlusion by gastric contents of the right and left mainstem bronchi with near complete occlusion by gastric contents at the level of the vocal cords. No significant natural disease and no lethal drug or alcohol toxicity were present. The cause of death was asphyxia due to smothering and the manner was homicide.

This report of two recreational mummification bondage-related deaths highlights the importance of scene investigation with collection of evidence, including video footage, photos, and detailed histories. Once deemed unresponsive, the bondage tape is often removed during attempts at resuscitation, and the evidence of the events may be lost unless there is a reliable witness or form of event documentation. Without definitive scene evidence, as the findings at autopsy are non-specific, a cause and manner of death should be carefully considered, as an "act of mutual consent" could be taken out of context.

#### **Mummification, Bondage, Asphyxia**