

## E17 Murder on the Cruise: The Micki Kanesaki Case and the Scientific Evidence Found

*Pierrantonio Ricci, PhD\**, University of Catanzaro, Catanzaro, ITALY; *Isabella Aquila, MD, PhD\**, Institute of Legal Medicine, Catanzaro 88100, ITALY

**Learning Overview:** The goal of this presentation is to provide attendees with knowledge of the famous Micki Kanesaki case.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing the evidence of the postmortem investigations performed by the Italian forensic team that conducted the autopsy.

The analysis of the case showed that the couple's relationship was marked by continuous quarrels for which, in 2006, the spouses reconciled and decided to take a cruise together to reconstruct their romantic relationship. The American tourist Micki Kanesaki ended up in the sea on the night between May 25 and May 26, 2006, while on a cruise in the Mediterranean, aboard the *Island Escape*. The forensic analysis of the circumstantial data showed that around midnight the couple returned to the cabin drinking, according to the husband, the remaining wine and taking a pill to help them sleep. The husband woke up at 4.30 a.m. Noting the absence of his wife, he prepared to look for her.

On May 27, 2006, the body of a woman corresponding to the description of the passenger who disappeared from the ship was found at 4.00 p.m. The body was transferred to the Port of Vibo Valentia, Calabria, Italy, on May 28, 2006. On this date, the forensic team of the Legal Medicine of the University "Magna Graecia" of Catanzaro intervened and was mandated by the public prosecutor to perform the autopsy. The corpse was dressed in a blue undershirt, a white bra, green trousers such as pajama bottoms, and a blue cotton slip. The body presented initial putrefaction with greenish color of the skin and initial saponification. The corneas appeared opaque and lividity was not imprintable, with no rigidity. At autopsy, widespread injuries were found, including: (1) a collar-shaped ecchymosis with excoriation of II-III degree and interruption of the same at the level of the jugulum; (2) an excoriated ecchymotic area on the anterior surface of the left arm; (3) another bruise with excoriation on the left arm; (4) another excoriation on the thoracic surface and on the anterior surface of the right thigh; and (5) an ecchymotic and excoriated area in the sub-umbilical region.

The internal injuries found at autopsy showed intense hemorrhagic infiltration on the right occipital region. On the right frontal region, there was an area with subarachnoid hemorrhagic infiltration. On the neck, there were hemorrhagic infiltrations of the injuries that were arranged in a collar (also documented on histological examination) with hemorrhagic infiltration of the epiglottis and hemorrhagic areas of the carotid walls. The lungs were also emphysematous on histological examination with no signs of drowning. Inside the trachea, at the level of the main bronchi, the presence of food material was detected.

In the forensic analysis conducted by the Italian team, the presence of a collar-shaped skin injury at the base of the neck, the presence of bruises on the anterior surface of the left and right arm, and the presence of bruises on the surfaces of the right thigh were attributed to attempts to grasp, which caused (in particular, the neck injury) acute cardiorespiratory insufficiency from violent asphyxiation due to throttling. This postmortem pathological finding was confirmed by histological examination that showed hemorrhagic infiltrations (when the woman was still alive) of the subcutaneous soft tissues and muscles of the neck region as well as pulmonary emphysema. The complete absence of water in the respiratory tract, stomach, and bowel led to the conclusion that death occurred about 30 minutes after the last meal, and the presence of food material inside the trachea and bronchi suggested a regurgitation in the terminal agonic phase. In this case, toxicological investigations were also carried out with an immunoenzymatic method on the ILAB 600 device on blood and urine to search for cannabinoids, opiates, cocaine, amphetamines, methadone, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, tricyclic antidepressants, and ethyl alcohol, which were negative. In the same laboratory, the findings taken by the police on the ship in the couple's room were analyzed, which were identified as fatty acids, vitamin E, acetylsalicylic acid, and ibuprofen. After lengthy investigations from 2006, her husband was arrested in 2008, and subsequently the Italian forensic pathologist who carried out the autopsy was called to testify twice, the latter at the end of February 2019, in Los Angeles, Orange County, CA, where the trial was conducted. The trial ended at the end of September 2019 with a sentence of life imprisonment for the accused.

### Forensic Sciences, Throttling, Micki Kanesaki Case