

## E51 Murder? No! It Is Just Drug Abuse: A Weird Crime Scene

*Stefania De Simone, MD\**, Department of Forensic Pathology, Foggia, Foggia 71122, ITALY; *Francesca Maglietta, MD\**, University of Foggia, Forensic Pathology, Foggia 71122, ITALY; *Michela Ferrara, MD\**, Department of Forensic Pathology, Foggia 71122, ITALY; *Giuseppe Bertozzi, MD\**, Department of Forensic Pathology, Foggia 71121, ITALY; *Francesco Sessa, MS, PhD*, University of Foggia - Forensic Pathology, Foggia 71100, ITALY; *Luigi Cipolloni, MD, PhD\**, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Foggia 71100, ITALY

**Learning Overview:** The goal of this presentation is to underline the relevance of integration of evidence collected by forensic pathologists during crime scene investigations, autopsies, and toxicological examinations. This evidence is fundamental to establish the cause of death and to settle the investigations, orienting them on the right path. Such orientation is particularly relevant in cases in which circumstances are unclear and the determination of the forensic pathologist can help address the investigation.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing that the autopsy and the toxicological examination are crucial to guide police investigations, particularly in cases where the crime scene investigation led to a different dynamic of events. They are all fundamental tools in the research and the collection of evidence and samples.

The presented case dealt with a 37-year-old man found dead next to a peripheral road by a passerby. The corpse was in a prone position, wearing only underwear and a sock. The prosecutor called the coroner to carry out the crime scene investigation and the corpse external examination. The external examination showed no injury of the back, multiple bruises and excoriations of the anterior part of the trunk, a lacerated wound of the chin, extensive excoriated complexes on the lower limbs (especially on the knees), and a linear wound on the scrotum. The thanatological parameters, collected on the spot, indicated that the death had occurred a few hours before the corpse examination. The lesions appeared to be plural, multidistrict, and polymorphous. These characteristics are typical of the application of contusive forces, being indicative of a trauma. The examination of the clothes revealed a piece of fabric missing from the crotch of the underpants. The missing piece of cloth coincided with the scrotum wound. At the end of the corpse external examination, the coroner took a sample of blood and urine.

The evidence gathered during the crime scene investigation and the external examination suggested a traumatic death. Police investigations also focused on a homicidal dynamic. During the investigation, the clothes of the dead man were found near the discovery site; a small fragment of fabric was found entangled in a net. This piece was compared to the fabric of the underwear of the deceased, showing that they came from the same garment. The interrogation of the wife revealed that her husband was a cocaine and marijuana abuser, and the man left home suddenly during the night.

The autopsy was performed, with unexpected results. Only small hemorrhages to the pectoral muscles, abundant stasis, and visceral congestion were found. No other traumatic injuries to internal organs were found. The toxicological analysis was necessary. Samples of biological fluids (blood, urine, and bile) were again collected, such as small portions of parenchymal organs (brain, liver and kidney). The first toxicological screening showed positivity to cocaine, cannabinoids and alcohol. Histological examination revealed widespread stasis and congestion of all tissues, with no microscopic hemorrhages. The autopsy and toxicological examination showed a death related to drug abuse, thus excluding the hypothesis of murder. In conclusion, the autopsic and toxicological examinations were decisive to guide the investigation and to reconstruct the dynamic of the event. It is evident the importance of integrating the findings from all the forensic team investigations in order to answer to judge questions.

---

### Autopsy, Drug Abuse-Related Death, Toxicological Exam