

H46 The Reconstruction of the Dynamics in Slash Injuries: A Case of Attempted Murder

Luigi De Aloe, MD*, Institute of Legal Medicine, Catanzaro 88100, ITALY; Matteo A. Sacco, MD*, Chair of Legal Medicine, University of Catanzaro, Catanzaro 88100, ITALY; Fabrizio Cordasco, MD*, Università Magna Graecia CZ, Catanzaro, ITALY; Fiorella Caputo, MD*, University of Catanzaro, Institute of Legal Medicine, Catanzaro 88100, ITALY; Carmen Scalise, MD, University of Catanzaro, Catanzaro, ITALY; Angelica Zibetti, MD, Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Catanzaro, Catanzaro, ITALY; Giulia Cacciatore, MD*, Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Catanzaro, Catanzaro, ITALY; Carlo Filippo Bonetta*, Brescia, ITALY; Francesco Sicilia, MD*, University Magna Graecia of Catanzaro, Catanzaro 88100, ITALY; Pietrantonio Ricci, PhD, University of Catanzaro, Catanzaro, ITALY; Isabella Aquila, MD, PhD*, Institute of Legal Medicine, Catanzaro 88100, ITALY

Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the role of the reconstruction of the dynamics in cases of attempted murder by slashing.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how to evaluate the real intention of the killing by the aggressor in cases where the versions reported on the event are discordant or inconsistent through the study of the dynamics.

A sharp-edged weapon is characterized by a tip, with a penetrating ability, and a sharp edge. The mechanism of action is penetration, pressure, and/or severing, each of which cause very different injuries.¹ They are in fact divided into: tip, cut, and tip and cut.²

Slash injuries, on the other hand, are cuts produced by weapons which, in addition to being sharp, are characterized by a weight that produces a blunt injury. The coroner's task is to assess whether the injuries were inflicted by third parties. In cases of attempted murder, it is necessary to investigate the real intention of the aggressor to kill, not just to harm the victim, to confirm the crime of attempted murder. In these cases, it is often difficult to establish this intention as the versions of the victim and attacker could be discordant. Therefore, a precise reconstruction of the dynamics is essential. For this purpose, the literature considers essential the assessment of the crime scene, the location of the injuries, the number of injuries, the possible presence of defensive injuries, and the stages of the struggle.³ This presentation describes an attempted murder with a slash in which the analysis of the injury to the victim allowed an accurate reconstruction of the dynamics.

A man was repeatedly hit by another man with a hatchet that caused widespread injuries. The victim tried to defend himself from the attacker. Soon after, the victim was transferred to the hospital. The attacker reported that he did not intend to kill the man, but that he only wanted to hurt him. The attacker attempted to prove this version by reporting that the victim had actually survived the struggle. The judge asked for an evaluation of the victim's injuries to establish the real dynamics of the event by comparing the victim's and aggressor's versions of the event. A medical examination was carried out on the victim. All lesions were analyzed, measured, and photographed. The topography of the lesions was reported on a special human model. The results of the visit were compared with the ultrasound and Computed Tomography (CT) scan results performed during the hospitalization of the victim. The visit revealed five lesions on different parts of the body. The victim was hit at the left region of the neck, at the left forearm, at the palm of the right hand between the second and third fingers, at the right forearm, and at the left thigh on the anterolateral surface. The analysis of the injuries made it possible to reconstruct the dynamics of the event and the phases of the attack. In fact, the injuries on the hands and forearms were attributable to attempts to defend himself. Therefore, it was possible to establish that the blows had been struck in a first phase on the left side of the victim, taking him by surprise. In a second phase, the blows were quickly inflicted in an anterior position with multiple attempts by the victim to defend himself in a situation of dominance by the aggressor. Only the use of the limbs provided a barrier that prevented the attacker from sinking fatal blows aimed at vital regions, such as the neck. The radiological examinations revealed that the injury to the neck was in fact very close to the nervous vascular structures. Therefore, the aggressor's intention to kill was clear.

The reported case shows that in cases of attempted murder, it is essential to analyze the topography of the lesions as soon as possible. The analysis of the event requires careful examination for defensive injuries on the limbs which, together with the radiological data, can constitute irrefutable evidence in court to clarify the stages of the struggle and demonstrate the real intention to kill.

Reference(s):

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2. Di Luca N.M., Feola T. *Manuale di medicina legale.* Torino, ed. Minerva Medica, 2017.
3. De-Giorgio F., Lodise M., Quaranta G., Spagnolo A.G., d'Aloja E., Pascali V.L., Grassi V.M. Suicidal or homicidal sharp force injuries? A review and critical analysis of the heterogeneity in the forensic literature. *J Forensic Sci.* 2015 Jan;60 Suppl 1:S97-107.

Forensic Sciences, Slash Injuries, Murder