

POSTMORTEM ARTIFACT BY STREET DOG IN MORTUARY – A CASE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

A man was found hanged by a tree. Police transported him to mortuary in the evening of 02.11.2002 and on the same day due to mass casualty nine other bodies were brought to mortuary at different intervals of time. Postmortem of body with alleged hanging was conducted on 03.11.2002 & it was found that his right hand below wrist & toes of right foot except part of great toe were missing. But these injuries were not mentioned in inquest submitted by police. The police officer was called, who stated that these injuries were not present at the time of preparation of inquest at the scene of crime & he was having photograph of scene of crime to prove it also.

KEY WORDS: Artifact, Animal bite

INTRODUCTION

Postmortem animal damage is frequently encountered in forensic pathology (1,2). In domestic surroundings, pets may attack the body. During initial investigation, postmortem animal mutilation may some times cause considerable complications as they can give rise to suspicion because of their appearance and site. Hanging is a form of violent death almost invariably associated with self, deliberate or accidental suspension. Attempts are, in rare instances, made to conceal a homicide by suspending the body by the neck after death (3). We present a case of postmortem dog bite in mortuary.

CASE REPORT

A 22-year-old man wearing pant, shirt & wearing nylon slippers was found hanged by a tree. The dead body was 3 to 5 days old, no injuries were mentioned in inquest except the ligature mark. The dead body was transported to mortuary & the postmortem was conducted next day. At the commencement of postmortem examination it was found that his right hand below wrist & toes of right foot except part of right great toe was missing. However, the hemorrhage on the floor of mortuary was not extensive & there was no extravagation of blood and no clots were present in & around the wound. The margins of wounds were irregular with abrasion & punctured wounds adjacent to damaged edges.

DISCUSSION

Postmortem injuries by wild animals, domestic pets & freely moving animals inside the house are commonly reported (4) but the injuries caused by animals in mortuary except by rats lacks the statistical evidence. The lesions caused by domestic animals are frequently seen in exposed areas such as face & neck (3-6). Another important factor is the small amount of hemorrhage seen at the scene compared to the large extent of the injuries (7) Moreover, the wound edges usually show little or no hemorrhage, that further suggest it was caused after death (4). The margins of injuries caused by carnivores appear less regular than those of rodents. Punctured wounds adjacent to the damaged edges were also suggestive of teeth marks. Another morphological criterion

for injuries inflicted by dogs & cats is the finding of scratch abrasions (7,8).

So, in present case the injuries appear to be the result of street dog wandering round the mortuary, as there are no possibilities of causation of such injuries during transportation to mortuary. A dog cannot enter in mortuary when the door was locked and there was no other way to enter. On the same night nine some more dead bodies were kept in mortuary due to mass casualty at short time intervals & probably the dog entered in mortuary along with mob and remained locked for some time in mortuary. The dog escaped at the time of shifting of other dead bodies to mortuary as no dog was found in morning when the doors of the mortuary were opened. The particular dead body was lying in the corner near the entrance gate and probably due to smell of putrefaction the dog attacked this body only. The present case emphasizes the need to appoint a chowkidar for mortuary round the clock & also indicate to be more careful to look after the mortuary. As the carelessness, which appears to be a minor error may create big problem socially & legally.

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