



SUPPOSEDLY NATURAL DEATH BUT HOMICIDAL

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Abstract: An elderly 87 years old octogenarian, a Negroid male who was said to have been apparently in good health, a polygamist (married to two wives) with children. He was said to have died naturally after a night sleep without waking up the next day.

The law enforcement agency was invited on the fateful day as the younger wife and children were suspicious of the first wife children. An inquest was sent to us as the investigation officers were doing their interrogation with each member of the family. It was on this course that they found out that the children of the first wife have perpetuated the act of murdering their father by hitting him at the back of the head and neck at mid night while asleep. The reason given was lack of attention to them in preference to the younger wife children needs.

Keywords: Homicidal death, injuries to soft and skeletal injuries (Occipital).

Introduction: Homicide is one of the foremost causes of death world- wide and head is the common target in majority of cases. The presence of traumatic wounds or defensive on the victim is a clear indication of homicide. This type of wound helps to adequately differentiate between homicide, Suicide and accidental deaths. The presence of “defensive wound”

means that the individual was able to put up some resistance to an assault by the assailant.¹ It has been one of the most serious crime as old as the civilization and even reported as early as in the bible.² This act of killing which occurs in two forms- “mens-rea” meaning preplanning and “Actusrens” meaning actual execution done to the victim. This act of inflicting injury on a victim most times follows lust for money, women or property (land /House acquisition).^{3,4}

Schivaknmar (2011) in his study said there have been an increase in assailant activities which he attributed to be due to poverty, urbanization, unemployment, illiteracy, frustration, prevalent

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harsh economy, social, unfavourable political environment/policy, insurgency/terrorism, drug addiction, easy availability of weapons-guns and the great widening between the rich and poor in the society.⁴

SachidanandaMohanty (2013) reported that more often than not homicide is always well planned by the assailant; as is never witnessed. It becomes pretty difficult to get the truth as most forensic experts rely on the act of the assailants to the victim. However, the extract most of the facts using scientific and circumferential evidences.⁵ He further enunciated that most of this homicidal assailants are often males – probably due to the number of the gender in most population of any nation. He still attributed the aetiology of this ugly act to be due to the factors Schivaknmar reported plus excessive intake of alcohol and bad accomplices. The low incidence in females is seen to be due to most customs, social values and preference of females to stay indoors and early marriage issues.⁵

Ullah A. (2014) also affirmed that male predominance as assailant accounts for 62.24% as compared to female with barely 32.76% which is 2/3 as compared to female victims in his study.⁶ Generally, crimes of this sort in society are mostly due to economic crisis and the youths are often the assailants as this brings a great concern to any development and future generation of any nation.^{7,8,9,10}

In our case, we suspected that an object must have been used to hit the octogenarian on the neck and the occipital region with sudden affectation of the brain stem with all the structures (nerve roots) ranging from the

baroreceptors/vasomotor centres. However, this object could be a sharp weapon or blunt trauma as this is the trend in many other studies in Pakistan.^{10,11} It is noted in some other studies that blunt trauma injuries and deaths following sharp weapons appeared higher in United Kingdom.^{10,11,12,13}

In this report we tend to unearth the exact cause of death of an octogenarian as to educate the relatives, populace and the state that it was not actually a natural death but a clear homicidal death inflicted by his children.

Autopsy Findings/Images:



Figure 1: Depicts: swelling upper and lower lips with multiple areas of haematoma.



Figure:2 (Depicts Linear bruises)

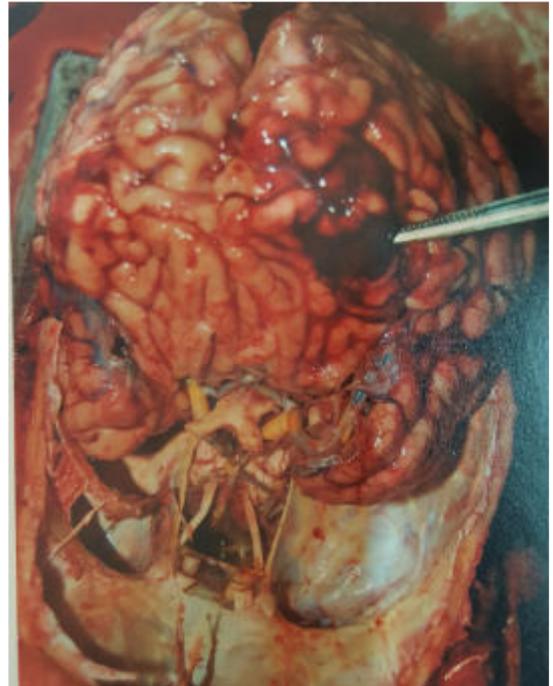


Figure: 3(Depicts Florid areas of Subarachnoid haemorrhages)



Figure 4: Depicts bleeding within the cerebellum and that of circle of willis.

Discussion: Following the findings at the autopsy with the severity of the trauma to the head we conclude that immediate cause of death is most probably severe subarachnoid haemorrhage. Moreso, the multiple soft tissue injuries on the temporalis, parietal and occipital regions with a very filial aged octogenarian we have no doubt on the level of subarachnoid haemorrhage bearing in mind that all skull sutures have long been fused.

Also seen is gross distortion of the basilar artery and the cerebellum by this extensive subarachnoid haemorrhage with florid area of interventricular haemorrhages. The affectation of this area not only affects various nerve roots like the trigeminal V, Facial V11,AcousticV111,vagus X, Abducent V1, Accessory nerve X1, Glossopharyngeal nerve 1X but will generally affects the baroreceptors; and the vasomotor centres (Figure 4).

The multiple bruises on the upper limbs and elbow goes to further affirm that is truly a "homicidal death" hence the presence of those wounds indicate some degree of resistance to forth coming assault from the assailant. The rest injuries on the lips-haematoma as in figure 1 and injuries at the back are sequel to overpowering of the victim and showed the degree of injuries inflicted by the assailants.

Conclusion: It is imperative to note the importance in use of scientific and circumferential evidence knowledge which must have paved the way for the expert (Forensic Pathologist) in getting to the root of what supposedly thought to be natural now a homicidal. This goes to strengthen the need to always investigate any death notwithstanding the history/circumstances of the death as related by the relatives, neighbours or public for proper documentation in death registry of any institution or nation. These in a great way assist any nation in effective development.

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