

PP 5

1.2

An uncommon combined methods of suicide. A case report

Sanjeeva HKR¹, Vidanapathirana M²

¹Postgraduate trainee, ²Senior Lecturer, Department of Forensic Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Corres. author: mudithavidana@sjp.ac.lk

Key words: Double methods of suicides, hesitant stabs, drowning

Introduction

Every one prefers a painless death, therefore, stabbing is not a preferred means of suicide. When multiple stabs on neck with several of them potentially fatal, it suggests homicide. It will be further complicated when such body is found inside a well.

Case report

A 26 year old married male was found floating face down in a well. There were no features of struggle at the scene. A table knife was also found inside the well. According to police, he was an accused of assaulting his wife. According to an eyewitness, the deceased had jumped in to a well (figure 1).

He had no previous attempts of suicide. At the autopsy, both conjunctivae were pale and there were more than 25 stab injuries on the front aspect of the neck (Figure 2). Most of them were superficial and parallel. Four injuries were deep and with bilateral internal jugular vein injuries. Both carotid arteries were spared. All organs were pale and there were flame shaped haemorrhages in left ventricle. There were no macroscopic or microscopic evidence suggestive of drowning. There were no defense injuries or injuries that cause incapacitation. Toxicological analysis was unremarkable. The cause of death was haemorrhagic shock due to stab injuries to the neck.

Discussion

In the presence of two potential modes of deaths, namely neck stabs and drowning, it is important to ascertain the real cause of death. Though the body was recovered from a well, there were no macroscopic or microscopic evidence of drowning. Further, it was evident



Fig 1. The well. Fig. 2: stabs on the neck

that four stabs were deep and had penetrated major vessels of the neck resulting massive haemorrhage leading to hemorrhagic shock with pale organs and flame haemorrhages in the heart. Therefore, the cause of deaths was ascertained as haemorrhagic shock due to multiple stabs to neck.

The suicidal stab injuries are accompanied with hesitant stabs or cuts and are multiple, parallel and superficial. The weapon was found at the scene. The possibility of recent depression cannot be excluded due to the presence of strong evidence of marital problems and alleged wife battering. In addition, the presence of two suicidal methods; concomitant neck injuries and attempted suicide by drowning have turned out to be an important indication of suicide.

Conclusion

When ascertaining the manner, the possibility of multiple parallel stabs in homicides should also be considered. However, combination of two methods of suicides is a strong evidence as to the manner of death.

References

1. Singh PK, Keisham S, Rishilu K, Devi M. Suicidal Death due to Stabbing: A Case of Rare Occurrence. *Journal of Indian Academy of FM.* 2014; 36 (4): 971-973
2. Austin AE, Guddat SS, Tsokos M, Gilbert JD, Byard RW. Multiple injuries in suicide simulating homicide: report of three cases. *Journal of Forensic and LM.* 2013;20(6):601-4.
3. Jović R. Suicidal knife injuries of the neck *Medcinski Pregled.* 1996;49(7-8):308-12.
4. Werner US and Daniel JS. Sharp force injuries in Spits and Fisher's *Medico-legal investigation of death*, 4th ed. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publishers, 2006, pp 532-606.
5. Singh VP, Sharma B.R., Harish D, Vij K et al. A critical analysis of stab wound on the chest: a case report. *J Indian Acad. For Med.* 2004; 26(2):77-9.