



Pathology Biology Section – 2009

G47 The Possibilities and Limitations of Neuropathology in Exhumation Autopsies

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand important opportunities in difficult situations which commonly surround exhumation autopsies.

It is often assumed that exhumation autopsies will yield only marginal information, least of all to permit in-depth neuropathological examinations. This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating how five cases prove otherwise. This information should be valuable to pathologists and the general forensic community,

Five cases are presented that offer a range of forensic/medical issues in the context of exhumation autopsies. Four cases involved civil or criminal litigations and one case was done for personal reasons of a family of a suicide victim.

The durations of burial ranged from two to more than 18 years. All individuals had been interred in either wooden or metal caskets, usually within concrete burial vaults. All had been arterially embalmed. At issue were the nature of the injuries or processes leading to death that usually involved head trauma, but in one case involved possible Marchiafava- Bignami syndrome.

Three of the cases had not been autopsied before, but two had. In general, preservation of the head, brain, and other organs was good to excellent and permitted satisfactory case analysis both grossly and microscopically.

The opportunities and limitations of exhumation autopsy neuropathology will be presented.

Exhumation, Neuropathology, Autopsy