



F44 Dental Age Estimation of Unaccompanied Minors as a Part of Human Rights Protection in Europe

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an understanding of some of the procedures used in European countries for age estimation of unaccompanied minors.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing the importance of age assessment for protection of human rights.

The increase in migratory flows in Europe, and the subsequent complexities resulting from them taken in the broader context of globalization, has revealed a number of problems, such as the protection of human rights, identification of those with the right to apply for refugee status, and the age estimation of unaccompanied minors. Unaccompanied asylum seekers deemed to be under 18-years-old face a very different path through the immigration system from that followed by adults. Generally, adults are subject to immediate deportation or detention in jail. Minors are processed through the juvenile system, where detection is not mandatory; they will often have access to educational programs and may be granted a residency permit. The assessment of chronological age is notoriously difficult. Age assessment is particularly difficult for those who are aged between 15 and 20 years, yet it is precisely this age group where the assessment of age and the outcome of the process is most critical.

In this context dental age estimation methods have proved versatile and are used effectively in various European countries facing the problem of illegal immigration. The purpose of this presentation is to show different examples of dental age estimation through case studies, where odontologists played a major role in age assessment. A review of six unaccompanied asylum seeker/refugees cases from Iceland, Italy and Serbia are presented.

Case 1: Presents a case in Iceland which was requested by Icelandic Directorate of Immigrants. A male from Albania insisting to be 16-years-old, was found to be over 20.

Case 2: Presents a case in Iceland which was requested by Icelandic Directorate of Immigrants where a female from China claiming to be 17. Estimates confirmed the probability that she was the age claimed, given the standard deviation. Kullman (1992), Mincer (1993) and Haavikko (1970) dental age estimation methods were employed.

Cases 3 & 4: Presents two cases in Italy which were requested by Immigration Police authorities and Judges. A male from Nigeria and a male from Iraq, both claiming to be minors. Relying on skeletal maturation as seen on an x-ray of the wrist, iliac crests, and dental panoramic (Harris, 1984; Kullman, 1992 and Moorrees, 1963), together with background information and external examination of each individual, only case two proved to be under 18.

Cases 5 & 6: Presents two cases from Serbia requested by Serbian NGO "Praxis." The cases examined regard two refugees from Kosovo who escaped after NATO bombing in

1999. In both cases, tables by Kahl & Schwartz (1988) Mincer (1993), Olze (2003), Orhan (2007), Gunst (2003), and from Smith (1991) were employed by an odontologist to verify the real year of birth in order to issue proper identification documents. The experts' report was based on the recommendations of Forensic Age Estimation Study Group of the German Association for Forensic Medicine including anthropometric measures and radiological analysis of the wrist.

The age claimed was confirmed by the procedures.

The presentation does not attempt to give a definitive account of the different scientific methods for the assessment of age, but age estimation of unaccompanied minors is a fundamental principle of human rights and dignity. A possible increase in the accuracy of age estimation process can only be achieved by using multiple age estimation parameters. In order to achieve and maximize the effectiveness of the age assessment process, implementation of international standards through a technical table with the political will is needed. Nevertheless, more observational data in the countries where refugees come from and a synergy between medical examiners and odontologists is needed, in order to assess the correction parameters to be used in dental age estimation formulas.

Dental Age Estimation, Asylum Seekers, Refugees