



## Pathology Biology Section – 2010

### G117 Newborn Kidnapping by Crude Cesarean Section

Todd M. Luckasevic, DO\*, Laine L. Frazier, BS, Abdulrezak M. Shakir, MD, Baiyang Xu, MD, and Karl E. Williams, MD, MPH, Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office, 1520 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

The goal of this presentation is to illustrate an unusual case of fetal abduction via crude cesarean section. This presentation will impact the forensic science community by illustrating the need for close collaboration between the forensic pathologist and the forensic laboratory when dealing with cases that involve kidnapping, drugging and restraining.

**Introduction:** The number of missing children reported each year in the United States remains astronomical. Between the years 1983 and 2008, 256 infant abductions occurred in the United States. The first documented case of a newborn kidnapping by cesarean section occurred

in 1987. Currently, there are a total of eleven reported cases in which the fetus was abducted by a prenatal fetal snatcher between the years 1987 and 2008.

**Materials and Methods:** This case involves an 18-year-old African-American female who was 38 weeks pregnant. The victim became acquainted with the abductor, a 38 year old African-American female, while visiting their respective male partners at the jail. On July 15, 2008, the women saw each other again at the jail and engaged in conversation. The victim never returned to her home that evening. On the next day, the abductor presented to a local hospital claiming that she just gave birth in her apartment to a healthy baby boy.

**Results:** The scene of the crime is a third floor apartment in Wilkinsburg, PA. There was a foul odor coming from the apartment. There were numerous flies around the windows. The decedent's body was located in an alcove off of the bedroom hidden by a mattress and head board. The body was that of a decomposing black female who was wrapped in a comforter. Upon inspection, it was noted that the hands were bound behind the back with duct tape and the ankles were bound together also with duct tape. The head was completely wrapped in duct tape with a plastic bag and duct tape totally occluding the airway. There was an incised wound of the abdominal area with clearly exposed intestine and uterus. The placenta was clearly visible.

Further inspection of the apartment revealed a roll of duct tape with a bloody fingerprint and a roll of plastic wrap. Loose pills were found on a shelf. All the above evidence was collected and submitted to the forensic laboratory.

The autopsy revealed a well developed, well nourished African- American female in a state of moderate decomposition. The body was identified via fingerprint comparison. The postmortem examination revealed a crude jagged edged incision of the lower pelvis and abdomen. There was exposure of a gravid uterus with a vertical incision over its anterior aspect. Loops of small intestine were exposed. A placenta was recovered from the comforter that covered the body. The distal edge of the umbilical cord revealed a dog-eared cut surface. Inspection of the cervix revealed that it was not dilated.

There were no other pathologic abnormalities or trauma identified during the autopsy.

**Conclusions:** The pills that were recovered from the scene were identified as Gabapentin. The decedent's blood along with a sample of the newborn baby's urine was found to contain elevated levels of Gabapentin. The abductor's fingerprints were recovered from the rolls of duct tape and plastic wrap. Investigation revealed that the abductor recently had a miscarriage and had recently faked another pregnancy going so far as to have a baby shower weeks before the abduction. The cause of death was certified as asphyxiation due to smothering by plastic bag and duct tape with contributing conditions of exsanguination due to partial evisceration of abdominal and pelvic contents and the presence of Gabapentin in the victim's blood.

**Pregnancy, Kidnapping, Cesarean Section**