

CASE REPORT**Facial Reconstruction during Postmortem Examination: Autopsy Case Reports****Rakesh K Gorea***Professor & Head Dept. of Forensic Medicine; Gian Sagar Medical College; Ram Nagar, Punjab, India.***Abstract :**

Dead bodies are brought to the mortuary with injuries. These injuries may cause mutilation of the dead body. In addition to the injuries by weapons, mutilation may be caused by other means too. Whenever there is mutilation to the face it becomes very painful for the family members and the friends to look at the face especially when it is the dead body. When a postmortem examination is conducted on the dead bodies in addition to serving other objectives of the autopsy one of the objectives is to give back the body in a presentable form so that relatives and friends can grieve over the dead body in a humanitarian and peaceful way. This objective will involve the reconstruction of the mutilated body, especially the face. This can be done in a variety of ways. Two such cases are being presented in this paper to highlight the importance of reconstruction of the face during postmortem examination.

Keywords : Reconstruction of the face; postmortem examination; mutilation of the face.

Introduction :

Mechanical trauma is one of the main causes of death in accidents and craniofacial trauma causes mutilation and may be responsible for missed identification of the unknown dead bodies, especially in the hit and run road traffic accident cases.^{1,2}

Mutilation of the faces by branding is done as a punishment for adultery, and sexual assaults on the female. It was also done in cases of treason.³

Facial mutilation by chemicals is a well-known phenomenon during marital discords.⁴ Involvement of the face is common (93%) when acid is thrown on the person.⁵ In one of the studies, facial injuries were found in 5% of the assault cases.⁶ Mutilation of the dead body may be intentional to render it unidentifiable. Mutilation can be a manmade or natural disaster. Mutilation presents a problem of identification.⁷ Mutilation may be done on small children usually after sexual assaults.⁸ Mutilation is common in homicides. Offensive mutilation was seen in Sweden in 30% of cases in one of the studies and injuries were caused by sharp-edged weapons.⁹ Sometimes the mutilation may be done after the death of the person. A case is reported where the son after killing the father removed the skin of the face. All this was done to take revenge.¹⁰ mutilations are done in homicides mainly to dispose of the body.⁹

If death occurs in such cases, all these cases will be brought to the mortuary. If there is facial mutilation then the face should be reconstructed to make the body presentable to the relatives.

Case Reports :**Case 1**

A male was brought for postmortem examination which had several injuries with a sword. There were big cuts on the face and

other parts of the body (Fig.1-3). The injuries had mutilated the face. Postmortem examination was done routinely. There was mutilation of the face due to several incised and chopped wounds on the face. Clotted blood and many injuries made the face look horrible.

After the completion of the routine postmortem examination, facial reconstruction was tried in this case to teach the students the best practices of a post-mortem examination. A plastic surgeon was involved in this case to do the suturing of the facial wounds (Fig. 4-5). The body was cleaned and dressed as per the culture of the deceased person (Fig. 6).

Case 2

A dead body of a female was brought to the mortuary with many chopped wounds on the body. Chopped wounds on the face mutilated the face and even it was becoming difficult to identify the body from the look of the face. There were fractures of the facial bones (Fig 7).

After the routine postmortem examination for finding out the cause of death and other queries of the investigation team, facial reconstruction was tried in this case.

Stitching was done initially but still, the face was not presentable (Fig.8). Then packing was done with cotton to give contours to the face (Fig. 9). There were also fractures of the facial bones with the loss of teeth. Fragments of bones and artificial teeth were placed and packed in the mouth to give the best contours to the face (Fig.9).

Even after this, there were gaps in the tissue due to skin loss, where we put the melted wax to make the contours of the face smooth (Fig.10-11)

All these efforts ultimately made the face presentable (Fig. 12).

Discussion :

We should take care of the rights of the dead body. The dead should be treated in a dignified manner. To give dignity to the dead facial reconstruction should always be tried if it is mutilated. We should use all the facilities available in our institutions to give the best results. We can involve other specialists in the hospital to increase the efficacy of our efforts. A plastic surgeon was

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Fig.1. Look at the face on arrival in the mortuary



Fig.2. Mutilation of the face seen after cleaning



Fig.3. Mutilation of the face seen after cleaning



Fig. 4. Face after stitching (front and right side)



Fig. 5. Face after stitching (left side view)



Fig. 6. The person dressed as per the culture and religion of the person



Fig. 7. Look at the face on arrival in the mortuary involved to stitch the facial wounds.

Offensive mutilation was done with sharp-edged weapons in these cases as was also seen in a study in Sweden.⁹

The above-mentioned two cases highlight how the reconstruction of the faces can be done during the postmortem examination. We should strive for the best possible outcomes by involving other



Fig.8. Face after stitching and packing close look



Fig.9. Face after stitching, packing, and artificial dentures



Fig. 10. Wax treatment of the wounds



Fig.11. Face after wax treatment of the face



Fig. 12. Look at the face while being presented

specialists.

We should clean the bodies and if possible, we should dress the dead bodies according to the cultural values to provide the best socio-cultural services.

Conclusion :

Whenever there is a mutilation of the body reconstruction of the body should be done as far as possible when we are conducting the postmortem examination. This is especially applicable to the face. All the possible methods should be used to make the body and face best presentable to the relatives. This will give a lot of solace to all those who will view the body and face for the last time. This work is usually highly appreciated by relatives and friends. This is the social responsibility of forensic pathologists that should not be forgotten.

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