



Undetected patricide: Inaccuracy of cause of death determination without an autopsy



Carlo P. Campobasso ^{a,*}, Domenica Laviola ^b, Ignazio Grattagliano ^c, Luigi Strada ^b,
Alessandro S. Dell'Erba ^b

^a Dept. of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Molise, via De Sanctis, 86100 Campobasso, Italy

^b Section of Legal Medicine, Dep of Interdisciplinary Medicine (DIM), University of Bari, Policlinico, Piazza Giulio Cesare, 70124 Bari, Italy

^c Section of Forensic Psychiatry, Dep of Interdisciplinary Medicine (DIM), University of Bari, Policlinico, Piazza Giulio Cesare, 70124 Bari, Italy

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 7 February 2015

Received in revised form

5 May 2015

Accepted 20 May 2015

Available online 30 May 2015

Keywords:

Patricide

Parricide

Death investigation

Post-mortem external body examination

Forensic autopsy

Stab wounds

ABSTRACT

Patricide (killing the father) is uncommon form of homicide. Usually the assaults occur at home in the absence of witnesses and adult sons are frequently involved. Homicides in a domestic context usually do not tend to recurrence, because the motivation for the crime ends with the death of the parent. However, this is not what was observed in the present case study dealing with the death of a 70 years old white man originally misclassified as accident and discovered three years later only after an additional homicide in a family context of a 60 years old white lady. Multiple stab wounds to the neck and thorax were misinterpreted at the external male body examination as blunt trauma falling down stairs. No forensic autopsy was requested and no comparison of medical findings with the results from the death scene, such as a bloodstain analysis was performed by the police officers nor required by the judicial authority. This was quite surprising because an additional but preliminary post-mortem external examination performed by a general practitioner on the male body already raised the suspicion that the external lesions were stab wounds thus requiring a forensic autopsy. Only the exhumation of the elderly body, performed years later, confirmed the diagnostic hypothesis raised by the first physician. The present case is quite representative of a death investigation not run professionally and performed by individuals with no specific training where most of the medico-legal investigations (especially for traumatic and violent deaths) are restricted to an external body examination without subsequent autopsy. Although misinterpretation of external lesions is inevitable and significant discrepancies between external body examination and forensic autopsy are not rare, in the case of contradictory results of post-mortem external examination or unclear/suspicious cause and manner of death, investigation should proceed necessarily with a forensic autopsy.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd and Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Patricide can be simply defined as the act of killing the father. It is a sub-form of parricide which means killing one or both parents.¹ Patricide has fascinated the public since antiquity representing an abomination in the natural order of things and, in particular, of familial relationships. For this reason it has commonly raised significant interest from the media and the scientific community.² However, patricide is a rare form of

homicide covering only a small percentage of all homicides committed.

In Europe, where a significant downward trend of intentional killings has been recently reported,³ parricides accounted for 2–3% of all homicides which is consistent with studies in the USA. Based on the FBI Crime Report 2012,⁴ approximately 1.5% of the homicides involved parents as victims and a gradually declining trend has been observed over the past years.⁵ However, in 2012 the rate of homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants in USA still remained much higher (4.7%) than the European one (1.2%).^{3,4} It has been calculated that about 5 parents are killed by their biological children in the US every week and approximately more than one hundred offenders are arrested on the average each year in connection with the killings of parents.^{6,7} In Italy, since 2000

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +39 0874 404 776; fax: +39 0874 404 778.

E-mail addresses: carlo.campobasso@unimol.it, cpcarlo@yahoo.com (C.P. Campobasso).

mother and fathers constitute 2–3% of all murder victims, with the rate of matricide being significantly higher (59%) than patricide. This is quite interesting considering that in Italy the total number of intentional homicides has reported a tremendous decline from 1.633 totally in 1990 to 526 in 2012 with a rate per 100 thousand inhabitants dropping from 3.38% to 0.89%, below the European rate.^{8,9}

It is not possible to predict violent behavior and, in particular, a parricide since little information is available on this specific topic. Limitations of research studies are mainly related to the infrequency of such crimes and low number of victims.¹⁰ To the best of our knowledge, usually the assaults occur at home, in the absence of witnesses, and adult sons are frequently involved.¹¹ The offender can be also a child or a juvenile/adolescent. When a minor commits parricide, he/she usually does in a cold and calculated manner¹² avoiding confrontation with the victim. For example, when the parent is sleeping, watching television, or engaged in some other activity. In a large proportion the perpetrator lives with the victim. Men are more likely to kill their parents than women.¹³ Adult sons with psychiatric problems are also often found not criminally responsible because of incapable of appreciating the nature of the act due to the mental disorder. Schizophrenia is common, followed by depression.¹⁴ Relationship between father/mother and sons often is cruel and abusive due to sexual or physical abuse.¹⁵ Other than previous history of violence, additional risk factors include the abuse of alcohol or other substances either by the victim or by the perpetrator and conflicts related to financial issues.^{10,11} The most frequently-used instruments are firearms (mainly in patricides), followed by sharp instruments (mainly in matricides).¹⁶

Finally and this is very interesting, homicides in a family context usually do not tend to recur, because the motivation for the crime ends with the death of the parent.^{11,17} Therefore, father or mother are often the only victim. But this is not what was observed in the following undetected patricide only discovered with the subsequent murder of a lady.

1.1. Case 1

In a small town located in the inner central part of Italy (Molise County), a morning day of September, the body of a 60 years old white lady was found on the bloodstained floor of her stationary store by her son-in-law. At autopsy, the cause of death was a combination of two stab wounds on the left side of the neck and blunt force injuries to the left side of the head with underlying depressed skull fractures from blows with a hammer (Figs. 1 and 2). In particular, although around the stab wounds there was also an additional incised wound commonly longer than deep, the depth of the main ones was enough to damage the anterior wall of the external carotid artery soon after the origin and the superior thyroid artery totally lacerated soon after the emergence at the level of the hyoid bone. Among the other vascular lesions, also the superficial temporal artery and the occipital artery were damaged by the blunt injuries to the head explaining the bleeding to death. The manner of death was classified as homicide. This was consistent with the evidence collected by blood pattern analysis. At the scene medium velocity impact blood spatter, commonly associated with beatings and stabbings, were found along with blood pooling. A first point/area of convergence of blood source was identified close to a drag pattern showing movement across blood pooling on the floor, where the person was originally assaulted near a copy machine (Fig. 3). Extensive radiating pattern of medium velocity impact blood spatter was found on the floor, on the boxes and the copy machine close to the body along with multiple cast-off bloodstain patterns released from the hammer in motion during the back and forward swing. Projected bloodstains



Fig. 1. Blunt force injuries to the head from multiple hammer blows, and stab wounds on the left side of the neck.



Fig. 2. Close-up of the stab wounds on the left side of the neck.

were also found on the wall of the basement just behind the copy machine where a second point of convergence was identified, close to an electric plug corresponding to the area where the first assault probably occurred. The suspect for this homicide was her son-in-law, a 40 years old man, right-handed individual who first discovered the corpse and called the emergency service. Based on the evidence collected by blood pattern analysis at the scene and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/101880>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/101880>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)