

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

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REPORT OF AUTOPSY EXAMINATION

DECEDENT

Document Identifier B201805325
Autopsy Type ME Autopsy
Name Hania Noelia Aguilar
Age 13 yrs
Race Unknown
Sex F

AUTHORIZATION

Authorized By Richard D. Johnson MD **Received From** Robeson

ENVIRONMENT

Date of Exam 11/28/2018 **Time of Exam** 08:40
Autopsy Facility Office of the Chief Medical Examiner **Persons Present** Ms. Raven Malcorvian; Mr. Donald Allen; Lumberton Police Detective White; FBI Agent Harris

CERTIFICATION

Cause of Death

HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE OF UNDETERMINED MEANS

The facts stated herein are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Digitally signed by

Craig Nelson MD 12 February 2019 14:36

DIAGNOSES

- I. Well-developed, well-nourished adolescent female found unclad in clandestine disposal site following abduction.
 - A. Found partially submerged in muddy pit under plastic folding table.
 - B. Hymenal tear.
 - C. Insufficient trauma, toxicology findings, or natural disease to explain death.
- II. Mild-moderate decomposition.

IDENTIFICATION

Body Identified By

Radiographs

EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

Length 64 inches
Weight 130 pounds
Body Condition Decomposed

The body is received prone within two white body bags, within a mesh body bag, within a blue body bag, within an outer, black body bag. The outer, black bag is labeled "Jane Doe, Robeson Co". (Identification was later made via comparison of dental radiographs.) The blue bag is sealed with tamper-evident plastic and metal lock #0000989. On the lock is handwritten 11/27/2018 and a person's name. The lock is cut and retained in the save jar.

The bags contain approximately 35 gallons of muddy water based on weight; according to law enforcement, personnel on scene apparently packaged the body with a large amount of the water in which the body was found. The bags are

opened in a fashion to allow drainage of the water through a strainer. The mesh body bag is folded and transferred to law enforcement for return to the agency of ownership. This item is not recorded as evidence.

Recovered in the strainer among numerous twigs, acorns, and leaves, as well as numerous pieces of sloughed skin. Included is the sloughed skin of the right foot, which has the nails of the right fourth and fifth toes only.

EVIDENCE OF MEDICAL THERAPY: None.

CLOTHES AND POSSESSIONS: The body is unclad and has no possessions other than a black elastic hair tie on the left wrist.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION: Following removal from the body bags, a sexual assault evidence kit (buccal swabs; oral swabs; pubic hair combings; pulled pubic hairs; vaginal swabs; and rectal swabs) is collected. Following collection of the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit, nail clippings are collected. Due to sloughing, the right index fingernail is absent.

The body is that of a normally developed, well-nourished, light-complexioned female appearing in her early teens. The length is 64" and the weight is 130 lbs. The body is cold, has not been embalmed, and has mild-moderate decomposition: there is diffuse, patchy, green, brown, and pink skin discoloration; diffuse gaseous bloating; and a foul odor. No insect activity is apparent. Numerous twigs and leaves are on the body, especially tangled in the hair. The skin is macerated from water immersion. Rigidity is minimal (detectable only in the wrists and fingers). Lividity is difficult to discern clearly, but appears as darker pink and green discoloration of the left side of the body (which is also reflected by darker discoloration of left-sided organs and tissues on internal examination). The facial features are flattened and distorted due to her prone position within the body bag.

The scalp is covered with wavy, black hair measuring approximately 20". It sloughs readily from the scalp due to decomposition. The ears are normally formed and without drainage. Each earlobe has a single piercing. The color of the irides cannot be discerned through opacified corneas. No bulbar or palpebral conjunctivae are apparent. The sclerae are stained pink with hemolysis. The nose is intact and the nares patent other than contact flattening. The lips are normally formed. The teeth are natural, in good condition, and have white metal braces with pink brackets. The superior and inferior frenula are intact. No oral mucosal injuries are seen. The neck is normally formed and symmetrical.

The chest is normally formed and symmetrical. The breasts are symmetrical, gas bloated, and without palpable masses. The abdomen is protuberant, gas bloated, and without palpable masses. The back is straight and symmetrical.

There is no external evidence of injury of the labia majora or minora. A hymen is present and is hemorrhagic with laceration from 3 o'clock to 6 o'clock. However, the hyperemia of the region and changes of decomposition including skin sloughing limit further evaluation. A portion of the anterior vaginal wall partially protrudes through the introitus on examination due to gaseous bloating. On speculum examination, the cervix is seen to be hyperemic. A small amount of clotted blood is loosely adhered at the 9 o'clock position of the cervix and is separately swabbed (labeled as "Additional Swabs") in the sexual assault evidence kit. The anus is atraumatic; stool exudes from the anus on manipulation.

The arms are normally formed. No needle punctures or ventral wrist scars are seen. Examined prior to clipping for evidence, the fingernails have minimal overhang (up to 1/16") and are dirty. The legs are normally formed and without edema, amputation, or deformity. The right foot is discolored tan-brown, presumably from exposure.

BODY MARKINGS: No identifying marks or scars are seen. While law enforcement at autopsy indicated the presence of a "small, black birthmark" on her right thigh, no definitive findings as such are identified. However, the outer layers of skin are sloughed due to decomposition, which may alter appearances.

INJURIES

On the upper back is a 2 1/2 x 3/4", irregular, superficially abraded, green area that appears to represent postmortem abrasion. Overlying the left scapula is a 5/8 x 1/2", irregular, superficial, yellow abrasion. Irregular areas of yellow drying and superficial abrasion are on the right hip.

On the right shin is a 3 1/2 x 1 1/2" area of irregular, faint, poorly defined, discontinuous, blue contusions. Inferior to

this area is a faint, poorly defined, 1/2 x 3/8" irregular, blue contusion.

There are pink-red areas of discoloration of the face, upper chest, left shoulder, pelvic region, left side of the torso, and medial aspect of each thigh. Additionally, the arms and legs have a few patchy, irregular areas of pink-red discoloration. However, most, if not all of these, appear to represent postmortem change rather than injury. Contusions and superficial abrasions may be obscured by changes of decomposition.

The hymen has laceration as previously described; see External Examination.

The scalp has patchy pink-red hyperemia. There is darker, red discoloration of the left temple region, which corresponds to darker regions seen externally of the head and face. The left temporalis muscle is darker than the right, but has no discrete areas of hemorrhage.

Reflection of the skin of the back identifies focal hyperemia overlying the spinous process of C7. There is patchy, poorly-defined hyperemia of the mid back and the lumbar region. Resection of the spinal cord identifies no hemorrhages; the cord is soft, which limits further evaluation.

DISPOSITION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS AND EVIDENCE

The following items are released with the body

None.

The following items are preserved as evidence

Sexual assault evidence kit as previously described; water sample from body bag; hair tie; right and left nail clippings; pulled hair; and blood card.

PROCEDURES

Radiographs

A postmortem radiograph is taken.

Identification

Identification was made by comparison of antemortem and postmortem dental radiographs, which show multiple areas of concordance and no areas of discordance. Refer to letter from Allen Samuelson, DDS.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

Body Cavities

The abdominal fat layer measures up to 4 cm in thickness. The body cavities have no hemorrhage or abnormal fluid. The serosal surfaces are smooth and without adhesions. The organs are normally located. The diaphragm is intact.

Cardiovascular System

Heart Weight 210 grams

The heart has a normal shape with a smooth, glistening epicardium. The coronary arteries have a normal origin and distribution with right dominance. They have no atherosclerotic stenosis and are widely patent.

The left ventricular myocardium is red-brown and the right is purple-maroon; neither has fibrosis. The ventricles are not dilated. The thicknesses of the right ventricle, left ventricle, and interventricular septum are 0.2 cm, 0.9 cm, and 1.0 cm, respectively.

The endocardium is intact, smooth, glistening, and, in the right ventricle, darkly stained with hemolysis. The cardiac valve leaflets are of normal number, pliable, intact, and free of vegetations. The atrial and ventricular septa are free of defects.

The aorta follows its usual course and has a smooth, elastic, tan-brown intima. There are no vascular anomalies or aneurysms. The venae cavae and pulmonary arteries are without thrombus or embolus.

Respiratory System

Right Lung Weight 150 grams

Left Lung Weight 210 grams

The tongue, strap muscles, and other anterior neck soft tissues are free of discrete hemorrhage, although there is mild hyperemia of the soft tissues on the left side of the neck. The hyoid bone and cartilaginous structures of the larynx and trachea, including the cricoid cartilage, are intact and have no adjacent hemorrhages. The airway contains no foreign material and has smooth, purple mucosa. The prevertebral soft tissues are free of hemorrhage. The cervical vertebrae have no displacement, hypermobility, or crepitus. Posterior neck dissection identifies no hemorrhage or fracture.

The lungs have the usual lobation. The pleurae are smooth and glistening; the lungs have no appreciable anthracotic pigment. The lungs are atelectatic. The parenchyma is dark red and exudes no fluid on sectioning. The lungs have no consolidation, hemorrhage, infarct, tumor, or gross fibrosis. The bronchi have smooth, brown mucosa and contain no foreign material.

Gastrointestinal System

The esophagus and gastroesophageal junction are unremarkable other than changes of decomposition. The stomach contains approximately 200 mL of thick, brown chyme with masticated fragments of unrecognizable food. The gastric and duodenal mucosae are intact and unremarkable other than changes of decomposition. The small intestine is unremarkable other than a Meckel's diverticulum. The appendix and large intestine are unremarkable. The intestines are opened along their entire lengths. The small intestine contains variable amounts of succus. The large intestine contains pasty, tan-brown fecal material. The intestinal mucosa is unremarkable.

Liver

Liver Weight 620 grams

The intact capsule is smooth. The parenchyma is red-brown and spongy without mass, yellow discoloration, or palpable fibrosis. The gallbladder contains a thin film of bile and no stones. The mucosa is uniform and the wall is not thickened.

Spleen

Spleen Weight 70 grams

The intact capsule is smooth. The parenchyma is maroon, soft, and uniform.

Pancreas

The pancreas has the normal size, shape, and lobulated architecture. The parenchyma is tan and uniform.

Urinary

Right Kidney Weight 120 grams

Left Kidney Weight 130 grams

The kidneys have the normal shape and position. The cortical surfaces are smooth. The kidneys have the usual corticomedullary structure without tumors or cysts. The pelves and ureters are not dilated or thickened. The bladder contains no urine. The mucosa is uniform, and the wall is not hypertrophied.

Reproductive

The uterus, tubes, and ovaries are of expected size and externally unremarkable. The ovaries are unremarkable on sectioning. The myometrium is uniform and the endometrium is purple-brown. The cervix is patent with a round os. The superior portions of the vagina are unremarkable.

Endocrine

The thyroid gland is not enlarged, and the lobes are symmetrical. The parenchyma is red-brown and uniform. The adrenal glands have the normal size and shape. The cortices are thin, uniform, and yellow, and there is no hemorrhage or tumor. The pituitary gland is not enlarged.

Neurologic

Brain Weight 1360 grams

The scalp has changes as previously described. The calvarium and base of the skull are normally formed and without fracture. There is no epidural or subdural hemorrhage. The dura is intact.

The leptomeninges are transparent without underlying hemorrhage, exudate, or cortical contusion. The cerebral hemispheres are discolored green and are markedly softened due to changes of decomposition. As such, the brain is unable to hold its own shape upon removal, which limits evaluation. However, structures generally appear normally formed and there is no apparent hemorrhage.

The spinal cord has no lesions.

Musculoskeletal System

The musculoskeletal system is well-developed and free of deformity. There are no fractures of the clavicles, sternum, ribs, vertebrae, or pelvis. The ribs are not brittle. The skeletal muscle is dark red-brown and soft.

MICROSCOPIC EXAMINATION

Cardiovascular

One section of left ventricular myocardium shows orderly myocytes. Further evaluation is limited by changes of decomposition.

Respiratory

One section of the upper lobe of the right lung shows no apparent abnormality, although evaluation is limited by changes of decomposition.

Liver

One section of liver shows no apparent abnormality, although evaluation is limited by changes of decomposition.

Genitourinary

One section of the right kidney shows no apparent abnormality, although evaluation is limited by changes of decomposition.

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

According to the case calls and information from law enforcement present at autopsy, on 11/05/2018, this 13-year-old girl was witnessed to be abducted. At 1645 hrs on 11/27/2018, her body was found in Robeson County in a water-filled pit approximately 4 1/2 ft deep. She was reported to be face down unclad with a plastic folding table on her back. Death was pronounced at the scene without attempted medical intervention. The water temperature was reported to be 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

The autopsy documented mild-moderate decomposition in a well-developed, well-nourished adolescent girl with a hymenal tear and otherwise minimal evidence of trauma. She had no apparent natural disease. Toxicological testing detected ethanol and isopropanol, both of which may be formed by processes of decomposition. No common drugs of abuse or medications were detected.

Due in part to limitations imposed by decomposition, the autopsy did not elucidate a specific mechanism of death. However, the totality of the circumstances and findings (including the history of abduction, autopsy evidence of hymenal tear consistent with sexual assault, and clandestine disposal of the body) indicate death by homicidal violence. With the likelihood of homicidal violence and the exclusion of other causes of death as determined by the autopsy, the means of death was most likely a form of asphyxia, which in some circumstances may leave only subtle or even no findings detectable, especially after decomposition occurs. Potential mechanisms of asphyxia may have included neck pressure/strangulation, external obstruction of the airway, internal obstruction of the airway (as by gag), mechanical means (compression, weighting, or restriction of chest movement), or other possibilities, as well as combinations thereof. As such, based on the autopsy findings and circumstances surrounding the death, the cause of death is listed as homicidal violence of undetermined means. The manner of death is classified as homicide.

DIAGRAMS

1. Adult FEMALE autopsy diagram

B 18-5325

Examined by W Date: 11/28/14

ADULT FEMALE AUTOPSY DIAGRAM

IDENTIFICATION: ☒ ID checked

