



## EXTERNAL BODY EXAM & DOCUMENTATION

An Investigator's Overview

1

### Course Summary

-  This course is designed to lead the medicolegal and police investigator through the proper understanding and practice of an external body exam of a decedent.
-  An initial exam while still on scene is imperative for the overall determination of cause and manner as well as collecting time sensitive facts and evidence.
-  This course details the process of a proper exam, who is responsible for conducting the exam, properly documenting the exam, and preparing the final case summary.

2

### Objectives

-  AT THE END OF THIS COURSE OF INSTRUCTION THE STUDENT WILL BE ABLE TO:
-  EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EXTERNAL BODY EXAM WHILE ON SCENE
-  LIST THE METHODS OF DOCUMENTING THE FACTORS FOUND DURING THE EXAM
-  EXPLAIN THE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO AN EXTERNAL BODY EXAM
-  IDENTIFY AND RECOGNIZE BASIC ANATOMICAL BODY REGIONS
-  EXPLAIN THE RULE OF 9'S AND HOW IT IS CALCULATED IN BURN MEASUREMENTS

3

### Understanding an External Body Exam

-  An initial exam while still on scene is imperative for the overall determination of cause and manner as well as collecting time sensitive facts and evidence.
-  This exam is only the first of two external exams. This one being on the scene and the second one at autopsy.
-  The on-scene exam documents what the investigator sees and what wounds, scars, tattoos, etc. are present on the body. **It is at this stage that much of the trace evidence used in a case will either be located or preserved for future collection.**

4

### Most Important Evidence of a Death


?


Why

5

### Most Important Evidence of a Death


The Body


You only get one chance at your first chance

6

### Who conducts the exam



It most situations the medicolegal death investigator representing the Medical Examiner or Coroner will conduct the exam.



In many jurisdictions the ME / Coroner is responsible for the body and the evidence attached to. This is set by State statute.



In the absence of a qualified investigator, either through experience or absence. A LE investigator or CSI might conduct the exam.

7

### Documenting the Exam

The body exam must be properly documented at the scene from the time the investigator arrives through the removal of the body.

These scene documentation notes are then used to inform the pathologist and prepare the final case summary.



Photographs



Written Notes



Digital Recording



Forensic Body Chart Forms



Use or develop a standardized scene report worksheet

8



## A Word About Clothing

### Does clothing look correct

- Appropriate for season
- On correctly – redress or dragging

### Look over clothing for any possible evidence

### Lift and move clothing to see skin surface

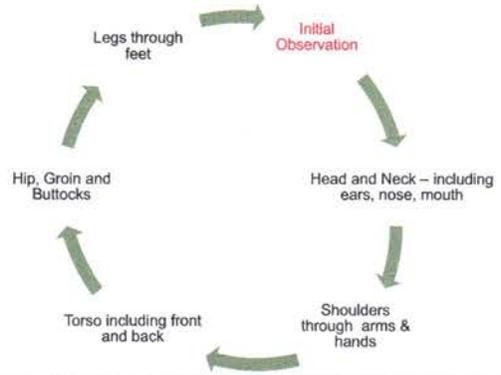
- Careful of possible bullet / stab holes

### Removing clothes

- Might be necessary
- Protect clothing
- Not a problem but follow your ME advise

13

## Exam of Body – Be systematic



14

## Head and Neck



Start at the top of the head. Look and feel for injuries, blood, foreign object. Lift head and check for neck fractures. Document blood or injuries found. Observe face and skin, any marks or injuries?

Look into – do not probe- ears, nose and mouth

- Eyes – intact, pupils, petechiae, corneal cloudiness, sclera drying
- Ears - blood, brain matter, dirt, foreign objects , etc.
- Mouth – blood, dirt, liquid, foreign objects, purge, froth
- Nose – blood, dirt, liquid, foreign objects, purge, froth

15

## Nose and Mouth



### Froth



### Blood



16

### Eyes

Corneal Clouding



Sclera Drying





17

### Shoulders, arms & hands

- Injuries
- Fractures
- Scars
- Tattoos
- Bite mark abrasion
- Medical intervention
- Signs of puncture
- Defense wounds
- Finger nails
- Trace in hands






18

### Torso

- Front and back
- Injuries
- Bite mark abrasion
- Fractures
- Scars
- Tattoos
- Medical intervention
- Distention



19

### Pelvic & Groin

- Front and back
- Injuries
- Fractures
- Scars
- Tattoos
- Medical intervention
- Sexual Assault
- Hip Fractures
- Blood



20

### Legs & Feet

- Front and back
- Injuries
- Fractures
- Scars
- Tattoos
- Medical intervention
- Leg length same?



21

### Collecting Evidence

- Fingerprints
- Body Fluids
  - Blood
  - Urine
  - Vitreous
- DNA
- Trace evidence and fibers
- Bagging hands



22

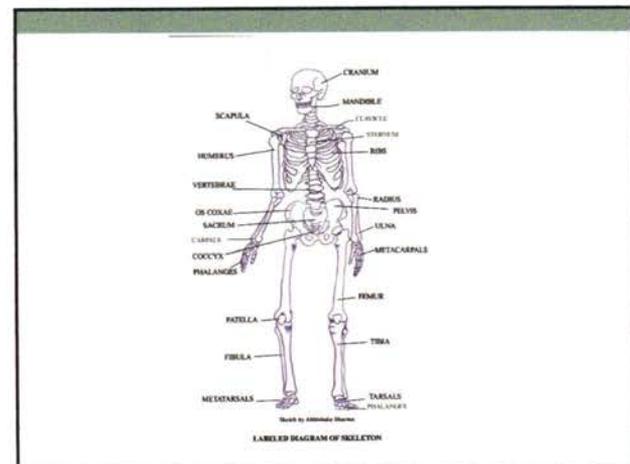
### Body Plans, Bones and Rule of 9's

It is important to understand the basic terminology and landscape of the human body. It is not always necessary, or even advised in some instances; to use all or only, medical terminology.

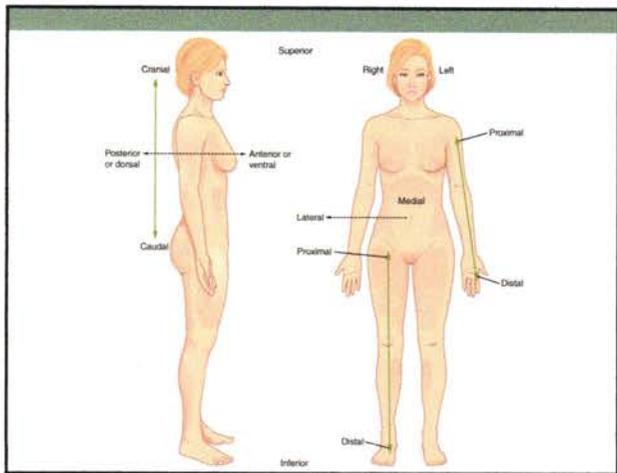
However, having a basic knowledge of body planes will assist in communicating with medical personnel and proper explanation in your case summary report.

Be careful to use terminology correctly or not at all. Be sure you can explain, without a chart, what your saying in your report.

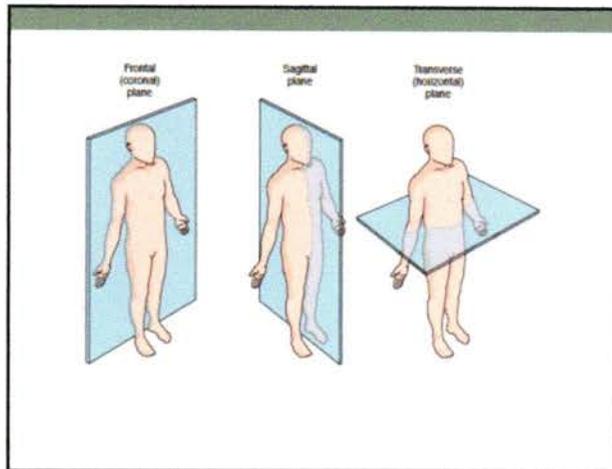
23



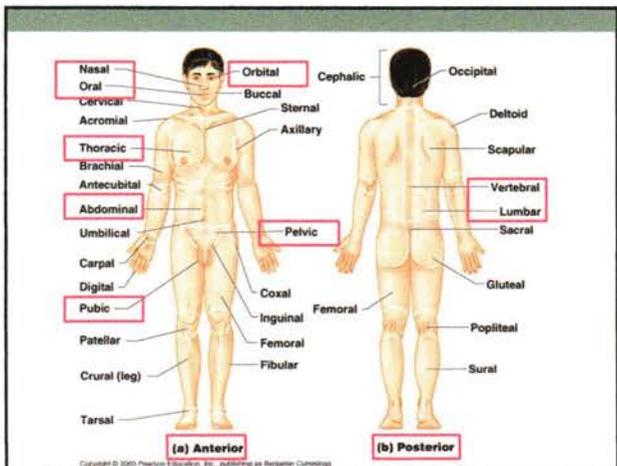
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25



26



27

### Rules of 9's

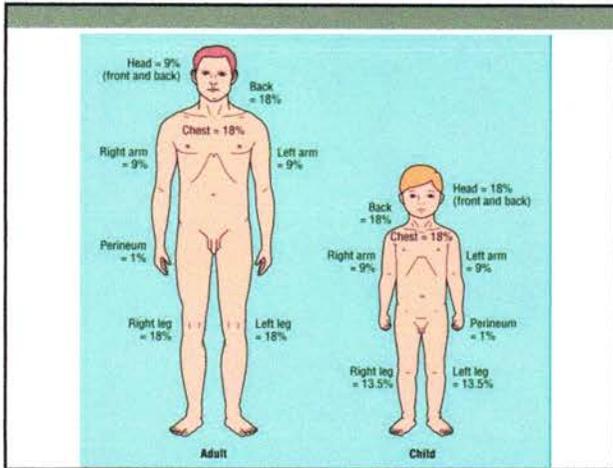
The rule of 9's is a method for estimating the overall percentage of the body burned by thermal injuries.

Each section of the body is identified by a %. By adding these values you will determine the total percent of body mass burned.

Typical fatal burn percent's

- Adult – 50% Healthy adults
- Child – 20% in children and elderly

28



29

## Report Writing and Case Summary

The case summary or report that you officially file after your scene exam is a vital piece of court record and will be reviewed by peers, court personnel, and the family.

- Report should be complete and concise-we were not there
- No opinions in your report - must have supporting facts
- Best to summarize in the same order exam was conducted
- Write report for reconstruction and later understanding
- Use of medical terminology
  - Professional but don't use words you can't explain later
- Keep or destroy notes?

30

## Discussion



31

Thank You

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32