



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



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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

Initial Exam – What do you see?

The investigator must document the following areas upon initial observation of the body.

-  Livor Mortis – Rigor Mortis – Algor Mortis
-  Odors – alcohol, fuels, putrefaction
-  Insect and/or animal degradation to the body
-  Position of body – face up, face down, on side, sitting etc.
-  Surface resting on – carpet, wood, ground, bed, etc.
-  Stage of decomposition
-  Clothing – type, signs of redress or dragging, appropriate

9

Documenting Exam – Wounds and Defects

One of the purposes of the exam is to locate injuries to the body which will aid in the determination of cause and manner.

It may also uncover injuries not otherwise suspected allowing investigators to search for further evidence.

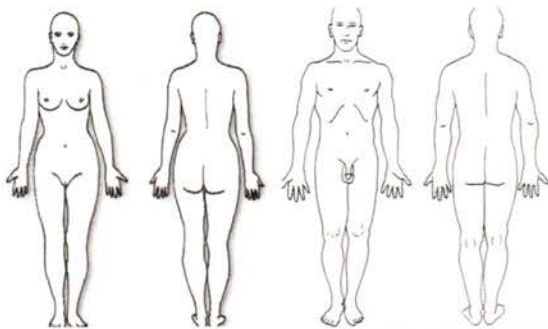
Better to find a bullet wound at the scene than 2 days later at autopsy.

Some injuries or markings change over time and may not present the same at autopsy.

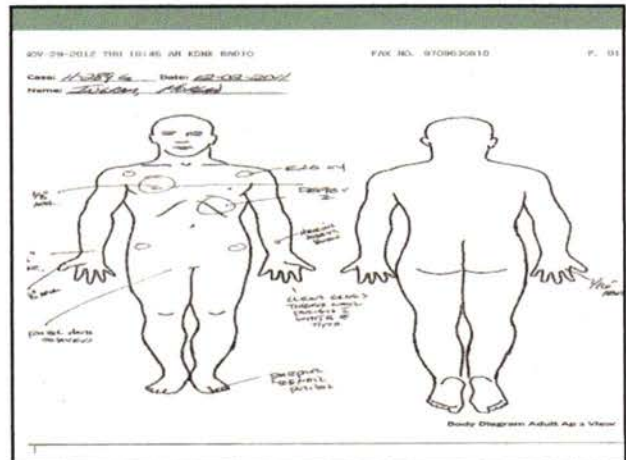
Be careful what you call a defect. A gun shot wound and a stabbing injury may appear the same at the scene.

10

Documenting Exam – Forensic Charting



11



12

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

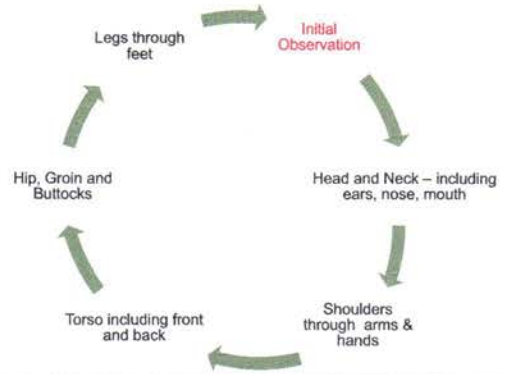
- Careful of possible bullet / stab holes

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

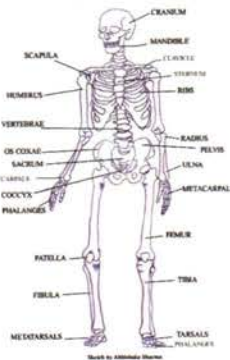
Body Plans, Bones and Rule of 9's

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.

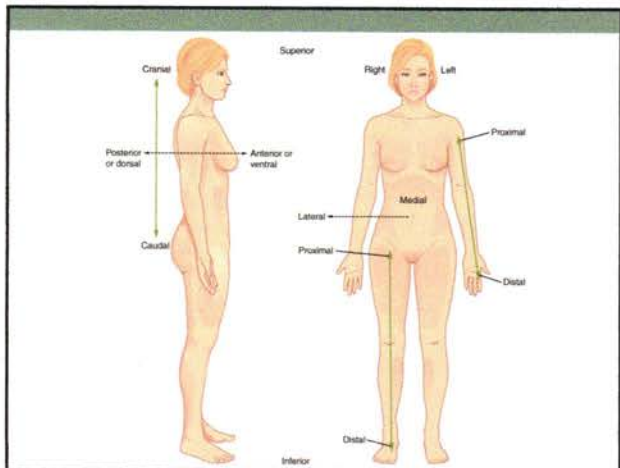
Be careful to use terminology correctly or not at all. Be sure you can explain, without a chart, what your saying in your report.

23

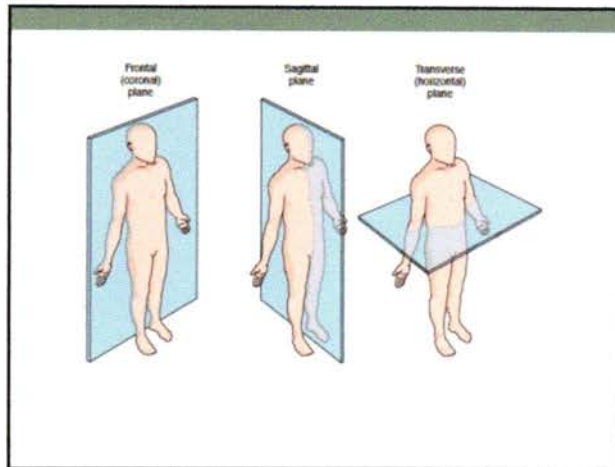


Thank to Animate Anatomy
 LABELED DIAGRAM OF SKELETON

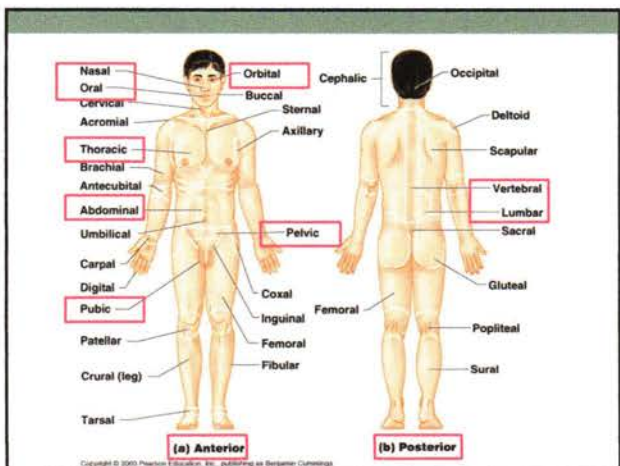
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25



26



27

Rules of 9's

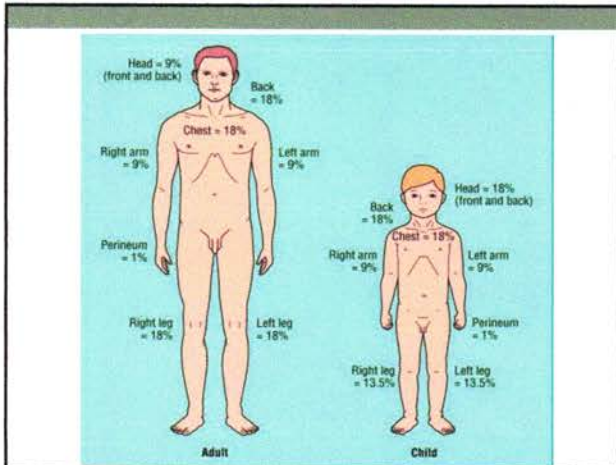
The rule of 9's is a method for estimating the overall percentage of the body burned by thermal injuries.

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