

DEATH 101

Mary Stevenson RN, BSN, CEN,
MSW, CMSW, LMHP, NREMT-P

Yipee
Skipee

Hi...My name is Morticia

I see dead people

Disclaimer:

The following presentation
contains material that may
be disturbing.

- A brief overview of death

Moment of Death

- The heart stops
- The skin gets tight and grey in color
- All muscles relax
- The bowels and bladder empty

- The body temperature typically drops 1.5 degrees F per hour unless the outside environment is a factor. The liver is the organ the stays the warmest the longest. This is why liver temp is often used to establish time of death.

After 30 Minutes

- The skin gets purple and waxy
- The lips, finger nails and toe nails fade to a pale color, or turn white as the blood drains
- Blood pools at the lowest points of the body leaving a dark purple- black stain called lividity

After 4 hours

- Rigor Mortis starts to set in
- The lividity, or pooling of the blood continue
- Rigor Mortis begins to tighten the muscles for about another 24 hours. Then the stiffness will reverse and the body will return to a limp state.

After 12 Hours

- The body is in full Rigor Mortis

After 24 Hours

- The body is now the temperature of the surrounding environment.
- The head and neck have turned a greenish- blue color.
- The greenish- blue color will continue to spread to the rest of the body.
- The odor will be unmistakable.
- The face of the person will be essentially unrecognizable.

After 3 Days

- The gases in the body infiltrate the tissues and large blisters form on the skin.
- The whole body begins to bloat and swell. This process is accelerated in a warm environment, or in water.
- Fluids leak from the mouth, nose, eyes, ears and other body openings.

After 3 Weeks

- The skin, hair and nails are so loose they can be easily pulled off the corpse.
- The skin cracks and bursts open in many places because of the pressure of the internal gases and the breakdown of the skin itself.

- Decomposition will continue until the body is nothing but skeletal remains. This process can take as little as a month in hot climates, and two months in cold climates.
- The teeth are often the only thing left years and centuries later because the tooth enamel is the strongest substance in the body.

Strategic pause to allow for discrete exiting of the room.

HISTORY

Where it all began:

Jolly old England

The Inquest

Post Mortem Exam
AKA:
The Autopsy

How the system
Came to us

The times they
are a changin

Coroner
or
Medical Examiner

What's the diff?

So....what's
to
Investigate?

Cause of death:
The condition that acts on
the human body to
result in death

Proximate
and
Immediate

Cause of death is
A medical description
of
the injury event

Mechanism
of
Death

The biochemical or
physiological abnormality
behind the medical disease
that resulted in death

Manner of Death

The five ways to die

Natural
Accidental
Homicide
Suicide
Undetermined

The Players

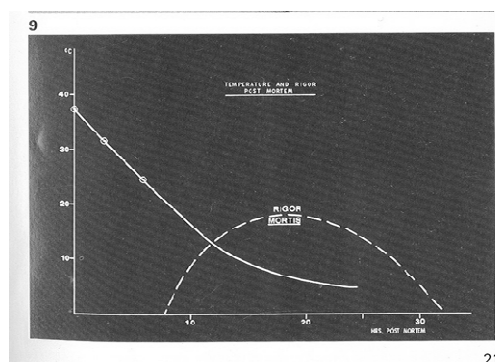
Forensic Pathologist
Medical Examiner or Coroner
Death Investigator
Crime Scene Technician
Criminalist
Serologist

Toxicologist
Anthropologist
Odontologist
Radiologist
Entomologist
Accident Reconstructionist
Botanist

Signs and Times

Rigor Mortis

A gradual stiffening of
the body's muscles



How the rigor goes

The grading of rigor:
0 = absent
Mild = perceived stiffness in a joint
Moderate = difficulty breaking rigor
in a joint
Full = great force needed to break
rigor

Red Herrings

- Cadaveric spasm
- Heat stiffening

Livor Mortis

discoloration

Algor Mortis

Body temperature

Putrefaction
AKA
Decomposition

The time line

Bottom line:
Time of death can often
be a SWAG

Strategic pause to allow
For discreet exiting
Before really gross photos