

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 B201701578
Autopsy Type ME Autopsy
Name Kristin Noel Bennett
Age 32 yrs
Race White
Sex F

AUTHORIZATION

Authorized By Karen L. Warwick RN **Received From** Robeson

ENVIRONMENT

Date of Exam 04/19/2017 **Time of Exam** 10:00
Autopsy Facility Office of the Chief Medical Examiner **Persons Present** Ms. Nicola Litchfield, Dr. Susan Venuti; Evan Whitley and Derrick Evans of the Lumberton Police Department and Special Agent Justin Jacobs of the State Bureau of Investigation

CERTIFICATION

Cause of Death

Undetermined

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

Digitally signed by

Julie Ann Hull MD 30 August 2018 15:06
Susan E. Venuti MD 31 August 2018 14:16

DIAGNOSES

I. Mild decomposition

II. Cocaine and metabolite detected in the liver

IDENTIFICATION

Body Identified By
Radiographs

EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

Length 62 inches
Weight 84 pounds
Body Condition Decomposed
Rigor Rigor mortis is not present.
Livor Livor mortis is not present.
Hair A few strands of remaining scalp hair appear to be short and brown.
Eyes The irides are indiscernible.
Teeth The maxilla is edentulous. All but two teeth are missing from the mandible.

The body is received supine in two body bags, an outer blue bag with an identification tag "unidentified #1 Robeson County" secured with tamper evident lock #0000068 and an inner white bag.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL EFFECTS: The body is received unclad and wrapped in a grey blanket. Through the navel

is a white metal ring with a blue stone.

EVIDENCE OF MEDICAL INTERVENTION: None.

The body is that of a normally developed, apparently fair-complexioned, decomposing adult woman. Evidence of decomposition includes: green, brown, and, black skin discoloration; loss of right parietal and occipital scalp with exposure of the underlying calvarium; near-total sloughing of the left sided scalp hair; degloving of the hands and feet; gaseous bloating; a foul odor; and several small, medium, and large-size maggots.

The head is normocephalic. The face is markedly distorted due to decompositional changes. The globes and palpebral conjunctivae are indiscernible. The left ear appears normally formed. The right ear is indiscernible. The lips are distorted, which limits evaluation of the oral mucosa for injuries. The neck is normally formed and symmetrical. On the left inferolateral neck, just superior to the clavicle, is a 7/8 x 5/8" elliptical defect with slightly heaped up margins and no underlying bony or soft tissue injury.

The chest is normally formed, symmetrical, and without palpable masses. The abdomen is flat, taut, and without palpable masses. The external genitalia are those of an adult female with decompositional changes. The back is straight and symmetrical. The perianal soft tissues have decompositional changes including extensive insect activity.

The arms are normally formed. No track marks or ventral wrist scars are identified, though these may be obscured by changes of decomposition. On the right shoulder, overlying the acromion, is a 3/4" in diameter round defect with sharp margins and no underlying bony or soft tissue injury. On the right anterior upper arm is a 3/8 x 1/4" elliptical defect with sharp margins and no underlying bony or soft tissue injury. On the dorsum of the left hand, overlying the 3rd metacarpophalangeal joint, is a 1/8" in diameter round defect with slightly heaped up margins and no underlying bony or soft tissue injury. The fingernails appear trimmed with chipped purple polish. The legs are normally formed the amputation, deformity, or edema. The toenails appear trimmed and clean.

IDENTIFYING MARKS, SCARS, AND TATTOOS: No identifying marks are seen, though these may be obscured by changes of decomposition.

INJURIES

No external or internal injuries are identified, though evaluation is limited by changes of decomposition.

DISPOSITION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS AND EVIDENCE

The following items are released with the body

The navel ring is released with the body.

The following items are preserved as evidence

Pulled scalp hair, right and left fingernail clippings, and a sexual assault evidence collection kit are collected as evidence and released to Evan Whitley of the Lumberton Police Department on 4/19/2017.

The grey blanket is disposed of at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner at the request of law enforcement.

PROCEDURES

Radiographs

Full body anterior-posterior radiographs are taken.

Identification

Abdominal radiographs for patient Kristina Bennett are received from Southeast Regional Medical Center. They are compared to postmortem radiographs of the decedent. There are multiple points of concordance and no points of discordance.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

Body Cavities

The abdominal fat layer measures up to 1 cm in thickness. The pleural cavities each contain approximately 10 mL of watery, red-brown fluid. The abdominal cavity contains watery, yellow decomposition fluid but no hemorrhage. The

serosal surfaces are smooth and glistening. The organs are normally located. The diaphragm is intact. All organs and tissues have softening and discoloration from changes of decomposition.

Cardiovascular System

Heart Weight 70 grams

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

The myocardium is soft and brown. The ventricles appear thin and dilated, which is likely due to decomposition rather than pathological change. The right ventricle, left ventricle, and interventricular septum measure 0.1 cm, 0.9 cm, and 1.1 cm in thickness, respectively.

The endocardium is intact, smooth, and dull red-brown. 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 minimal atherosclerotic changes with no vascular anomalies or aneurysms. The venae cavae and pulmonary arteries are without thrombus or embolus. No blood remains in the vasculature.

Respiratory System

Right Lung Weight 40 grams

Left Lung Weight 30 grams

The tongue, strap muscles, and other anterior neck soft tissues have no apparent hemorrhage. The right side of the hyoid bone is not fused, but there are no fractures or associated hemorrhage. The cartilaginous structures of the larynx and the trachea are normally formed and without fracture. The cervical vertebrae have no displacement, hypermobility, or crepitus. No prevertebral soft tissue hemorrhage is apparent.

The lungs have the usual lobation with moderate anthracotic pigment. The parenchyma is red-black, atelectatic, and exudes no fluid. The lungs have no consolidation, tumor, gross fibrosis, or enlargement of air spaces. The airways are unobstructed, lined by smooth pink-tan mucosa, and contain no foreign materials.

Gastrointestinal System

The esophagus and gastroesophageal junction are unremarkable other than changes of decomposition. The stomach contains a few dried pieces of unrecognizable food. The duodenal mucosa is intact and unremarkable. The small and large intestines are unremarkable to inspection and palpation other than changes of decomposition.

Liver

Liver Weight 150 grams

The intact hepatic capsule is smooth. The parenchyma is soft, green-black, and without mass. The gallbladder is not identified.

Spleen

No splenic tissue is identified.

Pancreas

The pancreas has a normal size, shape, and lobulated structure. The parenchyma is pink-tan.

Urinary

Right Kidney Weight 20 grams

Left Kidney Weight 40 grams

The kidneys have a 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 urinary bladder is empty.

Reproductive

The uterus has a pink-tan myometrium without gross lesions. The ovaries are unremarkable.

Endocrine

The thyroid gland is not enlarged, and the lobes are symmetrical. The parenchyma is red-brown, firm, and uniform. The adrenal glands have the usual size and shape. They are markedly decomposed but maintain thin, yellow cortices with no hemorrhage or tumor.

Neurologic

Brain Weight 120 grams

The residual scalp is free of hemorrhage. The calvarium and base of the skull are normally configured and have no fractures. The dura mater is intact, with no epidural hemorrhage. When the dura mater is reflected, the brain is reduced to a grey-green pasty mass with a few focal areas of grey-white matter distinction. There is no obvious subdural or intraparenchymal hemorrhage, though evaluation is severely limited by changes of decomposition.

Musculoskeletal System

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

MICROSCOPIC EXAMINATION

Microscopic Comment

Sections of heart, lungs, liver, and kidney are submitted for microscopic evaluation.

Extensive changes of decomposition are seen including gas artifact, bacterial overgrowth, partial loss of architecture, loss of cellular detail, and loss of basophilic staining and preclude visualization of anomalies or pathology, if present.

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

According to the information received, this 32-year-old woman was found unclad and covered by a blanket inside of a television cabinet in an abandoned home. The body was in a mild state of decomposition. Positive identification was confirmed by comparison of antemortem and postmortem radiographs. This case is associated with another female (OCME NC B17-1579), who was found on the same day, face down and unclad in a nearby residential trash can.

The autopsy documented an adult woman with changes of decomposition including: green, brown, and, black skin discoloration; loss of right parietal and occipital scalp with exposure of the underlying calvarium; near-total sloughing of the left sided scalp hair; degloving of the hands and feet; gaseous bloating; a foul odor; and several small, medium, and large-size maggots. No significant pre-existing natural disease was documented.

No obvious external or internal injuries were identified, though evaluation was limited by changes of decomposition.

Postmortem toxicological analysis detected the presence of cocaine, benzoylecgonine (metabolite of cocaine), cocaethylene (created in the presence of cocaine and ethanol), and gabapentin. Nicotine was also detected.

While the toxicology results can explain the death, and there are no obvious fatal injuries, an association between the drug use and the decedent's death cannot be concluded with certainty. The possibility of asphyxial injury, including those made by compression, cannot be excluded in the setting of covert disposal of the body and poor preservation of the remains. Based on the available investigative findings to date, autopsy findings, toxicology results, and circumstances surrounding the death, as currently understood, at this time, the cause and manner of death are best classified as undetermined.

DIAGRAMS

1. Body Diagram: Adult (Front/Back)

B ~~17-1578~~ 17-1578
Examined by _____ Date: _____

ADULT FEMALE AUTOPSY DIAGRAM
IDENTIFICATION: _____ ID checked

