



A STUDY ON PATTERN OF DEATHS IN AUTOPSIES CONDUCTED AFTER SUNSET AT PATNA MEDICAL COLLEGE.

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ABSTRACT

Medicolegal autopsies are performed as a part of scientific investigation in aiding the administration of justice. In India, night autopsies are being performed in Government Hospitals since a long time. Night autopsies should be done in adequate light, in hospitals with complete and advance infrastructure, only after the approval of the District Magistrate. Out of the total 100 autopsies performed, majority were homicidal in nature, followed by accidents including drowning & a few sudden-deaths. Law & order was disrupted in 80 cases. The cause of death in majority of the cases was shock & haemorrhage, followed by head injury & projectile firearms. The majority were males, aged 31-40 years. Additional human resources should be present for smooth and timely conduction of post-mortem after sunset. The government needs to ensure that mortuary facilities & infrastructure are upgraded in all the existing medical institutions before implementing regular night autopsies. Administrating authorities must thoroughly analyse the law and order situations before ordering for night autopsy that could and should be conducted in daylight and therefore be avoided after sunset.

KEYWORDS : Autopsy after sunset; Custodial deaths; District Magistrate**INTRODUCTION**

An autopsy or post-mortem examination is a scientific examination of a person's dead body, conducted by a doctor or medical board, to ascertain the cause, manner and time since death, for various medical, legal and research purposes. Post-mortem is otherwise known as autopsy or necropsy. The objective of the post-mortem examination is to establish the identity of a deceased, when not known, to ascertain the time since death and the cause of death; and whether the death was natural or unnatural and if unnatural, whether it was homicidal, suicidal or accidental. In the case of newly born infants, the question of live birth and viability assume importance and should be determined.

Medicolegal autopsies are performed as a part of scientific investigation in aiding the administration of justice. In India, night autopsies are being performed in Government Hospitals since a long time. Potential problems of autopsies during night include a shortage of the necessary human resources & lack of adequate illumination on par with daylight which could result in misinterpretation of certain findings.

Night autopsies should be done in adequate light, in hospitals with complete and advance infrastructure, only after the approval of the District Magistrate.

It should only be done in cases pertaining to disruption of law and order, road traffic accidents, with an exception to Homicidal cases, custodial deaths, dowry deaths and deaths of females within 7 years of marriage.

In states like Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, night autopsies are being performed in Government Hospitals since a long time.

The Government of India issued a detailed notification on November 15, 2021, regarding the "Conduct of post-mortem in hospitals after sunset".

The salient points in the notification are as below.

1. Post-mortem can be conducted after sunset at hospitals that have the infrastructure for conducting such post-mortems on a regular basis.
2. Cases under categories such as homicide, rape,

decomposed bodies, and suspected foul play, should not be subjected to post-mortem during night time unless there is a law and order threat perception.

3. Post-mortems for organ donation should be taken up on priority and be conducted even after sunset if adequate infrastructure is available.

4. It is also to be ensured that video recording shall be done for all night time post-mortems to rule out doubts, and shall be preserved for future reference for legal purposes.

The present study was conducted to make an in-depth study & to analyze the pattern, manner & cause of deaths of all the autopsy examinations after sunset, conducted in the mortuary of our department. This study attempts to bring about awareness among the law enforcement agencies regarding the type of cases to be approved for night autopsy.

AIM OF THE STUDY

1. To make an in-depth study of all the post-mortem examinations after sunset done at P.M.C.H., Patna during the period 01/01/2023-31/12/2023.
2. To analyze the pattern of death
3. To find out-A. Manner of death
B. Cause of death
C. Percentage of cases that met the criteria for conducting night autopsy.
4. To bring about awareness among law enforcement agencies regarding the type of cases to be approved for night autopsy.

MATERIALS & METHOD

The present study is a retrospective observational study conducted on cases brought for medicolegal autopsy after sunset (after 18:00 hours) in the mortuary of the Department of FMT, Patna Medical College from 01/01/2023 - 30/12/2023. The required information was sourced from the concerned I.O. of the case & relatives of the deceased. Order of the DM, brief facts and history of the case and inquest papers were also studied.

Inclusion Criterion:

Cases concerned for the maintenance of law and order brought for post-mortem examination at P.M.C.H., Patna.

Factors:

1. All age groups.
 2. All sexual orientations.
 3. Cases brought to P.M.C.H., Patna from any district of Bihar except Patna, with CJM order.
 4. Order of DM; Patna for night post mortem.
- Exclusion Criterion: All cases that came for an autopsy before sunset in PMCH Patna.

OBSERVATIONS & DISCUSSIONS

The present study was conducted on all the cases brought for Medico-legal autopsy after 18:00 hours. Out of the total 2754 autopsies performed during 01/01/2023-31/12/2023, 30 autopsies were performed after sunset.

Table 01 The Maximum Number Of Cases Belonged To The Age Group 41-60 Years (13 Cases)

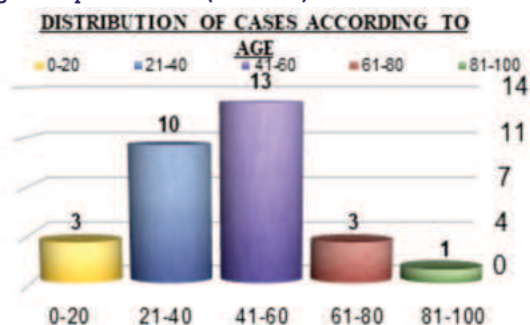


Table 02 Male Preponderance Was Seen (90%)

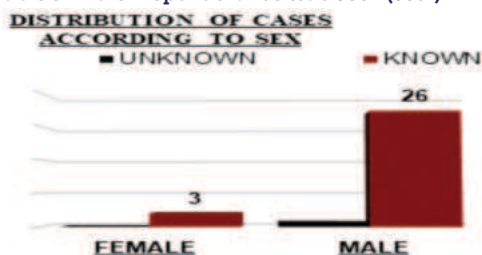


Table 03 Patna District Had The Highest Cases Followed By Saran, Bhojpur & Nalanda.

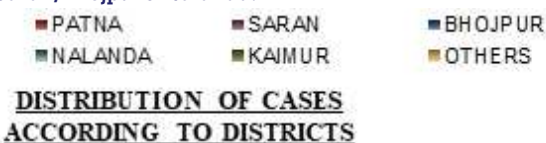
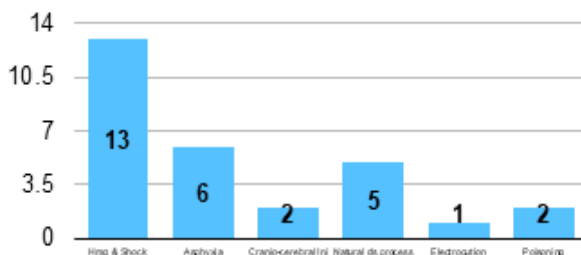


Table 04 Number Of Accidental Deaths(44%) Were The Highest, Followed By Homicidal(26%), Natural(19%) & Suicidal Deaths(11%).



Table 05 Haemorrhage & Shock (43%) Was The Most Common Cause Of Death, Followed By Asphyxia (20%) & Natural Disease Process(16%).

CAUSE OF DEATH



RESULTS

Out of the total 100 autopsies performed, the majority were homicidal in nature, followed by accidents including drowning & a few sudden deaths. Law & order was disrupted in 80 cases. The cause of death in the majority of the cases was shock & haemorrhage, followed by head injury & projectile firearms. The majority were males, aged 31-40 years.

CONCLUSION

Night autopsies should be done in adequate light, in hospitals with complete & advanced infrastructure, only after the approval of the District Magistrate. Additional human resources should be present for smooth and timely conduction of post-mortem after sunset. The government needs to ensure that mortuary facilities & infrastructure are upgraded in all the existing medical institutions before implementing regular night autopsies & hence, should only be done in cases pertaining to disruption of law & order, road traffic accidents, with the exception to Homicidal cases, custodial deaths & dowry deaths. Administrating authorities must thoroughly analyse the law and order situations before ordering for night autopsy that could and should be conducted in daylight and therefore be avoided after sunset.

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