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TRAGIC SELFIE-A LIFE LOST IN THE PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT SHOT: A CASE REPORT

Forensic Medicine

Dr. Abhishek Bhati Junior Resident Academic, M.A.M.C., Delhi

Dr. Pavan Junior Resident Academic, M.A.M.C., Delhi

Dr. Santhoshkumar R Junior Resident, M.A.M.C., Delhi

Dr. Sunil Naagar Director Pofessor, H.O.D., M.A.M.C., Delhi

Dr. Utkarsh Pathak* Junior Resident Academic, M.A.M.C., Delhi *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The term "selfie" emerged as a recent trend and was named Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year in 2013. It refers to a photograph that an individual takes of themselves (or with a group), usually with a smartphone, often intended for sharing on social media. In 2015, Google estimated that 24 billion selfies were uploaded to Google Photos. Approximately 1 million selfies are taken daily by individuals aged 18 to 24, and Pew Research found that around 55% of millennials have shared a selfie on social media. Technology has played a significant role in popularizing selfies, with numerous websites offering tips on how to capture the perfect selfie and showcasing various poses. New terms like "koolfie," "restaurantfie," "musclefie," and "dentisfie" have also emerged. The introduction of tools like selfie sticks and "selfie shoes" has further fueled people's obsession with selfies. Nowadays, the choice of smartphones is often influenced by their selfie camera quality, and schools and colleges even hold events promoting selfies, such as contests for the "best selfie." Taking and sharing selfies on social media has become a form of self-expression. Some individuals even position themselves in dangerous situations to attract more attention online. This has, unfortunately, resulted in tragic outcomes. Selfies are rarely classified as an official cause of death, leading many to believe that selfie-related fatalities are underreported. For instance, accidents that occur while taking selfies might be recorded simply as road traffic accidents, masking the true extent of the problem. Therefore, it is crucial to accurately assess the incidence, causes, and factors contributing to selfie-related deaths in order to implement effective interventions.

KEYWORDS

Selfie, millenials, death, traffic accidents, smartphones

INTRODUCTION

A 2024 article from Euronews reveals that India has the highest rate of selfie-related deaths globally, accounting for 26.4%, with the United States at 10.3% and Russia at 8.7%. Additionally, a 2019 article from ABC indicates that India's substantial population of individuals under 30 could contribute to this trend, as this age group frequently engages in selfie-related accidents. India: The 'Selfie Death' Capital.With a population exceeding 1.4 billion and 1.15 billion cell phones, India holds the record for the highest number of selfie-related deaths. To date, many such fatalities have been reported in the country, accounting for more than half of all selfie-related deaths worldwide. This highlights the nation's dangerous fascination with group photos among its less cautious youth. Causes of Selfie Deaths: The three leading causes of selfie-related deaths are drowning, transportation accidents, and falls.

CASE REPORT

A case of a 15 years old male with an alleged history of fall from top of a stationary train when he was electrocuted while taking the selfie.

What might have happened?

As witnessed, the deceased was taking a selfie on top of a stationary train and trains have high tension electric wires above them, so the deceased might have come into the high-voltage arc of the electric wires as his smartphone was barely ½ feet away from high tension wires. This led to electrical flash burn.

Figure 1

Autopsy Finding: Deceased had almost 75% -80% burn of total body surface area.(Fig.2) Most of the visceral organs were found to be congested. Petechial hemorrhage was noted on the epicardial surface of the heart.

Figure 2

DISCUSSION

1) No Selfi Zones: Given the alarming rise in selfie-related deaths, experts have recommended the establishment of "no-selfie zones" in India to combat this troubling trend. The situation has become so dire that cities like Mumbai and Goa have designated 16 and 24 "no-selfie zones" in various tourist locations, respectively. These measures involve deploying volunteers and police personnel to monitor dangerous areas, reinforcing risky spots, and using public address systems to warn tourists of potential hazards. Social media platforms are also being utilized to raise awareness among the public.
2) App for Prevention: Researchers are developing a smartphone application designed to serve as a warning system. This app will use location services to detect when someone is taking a selfie in a risky or unsafe location and will alert them to the potential dangers.
3) Safe Selfie Awareness: While selfies themselves aren't inherently dangerous, the behavior associated with taking them can be risky. Warning signs and "no selfie" zones should be prominently displayed in all hazardous tourist areas. Ultimately, individual awareness is crucial in preventing such tragedies. It is essential to educate students in schools and colleges about the risks associated with high-risk selfie-taking in dangerous environments. Public self-awareness is key to addressing this digital issue.

CONCLUSIONS

Cause of death in this case was due to cardiogenic shock subsequent to electrical flash burn. Features of burn, electric shock and fall from height; all 3 types were prominent in this case.

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