

## Unit 3 - Death Investigations

1. Manner of Death - the circumstances that led to the 5 classifications fatality.  $\hat{=}$  is the culmination of the complete investigation.

A. Homicide - nonaccidental death resulting from negligent, reckless, or intentional actions of another person

B. Suicide - an individual takes his/her own life w/ lethal intention. Must demonstrate that the person acted alone

(1) most common - self-inflicted gunshot wounds  $\hat{=}$  hanging  $\hat{=}$  deliberate drug overdose

C. Accidental - must not be intent to cause harm on the part of either the perpetrator or victim

(1) most common - traffic accidents, drug overdoses,  $\hat{=}$  drownings

(2) should have toxicological analysis

D. Natural causes - includes diseases  $\hat{=}$  continual environmental abuse

$\downarrow$  chronic drug uses  $\hat{=}$  /or alcohol abuse, longtime exposure to natural toxins or asbestos

E. Undetermined - only used when a rational explanation cannot be established during autopsy or toxicological / microscopic exams

2. Cause of Death - primary objective of an autopsy. 5 causes Identifies the injury or disease that led to the chain of events resulting in death

A. Blunt-Force Injury - caused by a non-sharpened object

(1) can cause abrasions (scrapes) or lacerations (cuts)

(2) can crush tissue, causing contusions (bruises), aren't always visible

(3) sometimes show pattern of the weapon used

(4) a single blow can cause instant death w/ very little visible damage

B. Sharp-Force Injury - occur from weapons w/  
sharp edges

(1) cuts (laceration)

(2) stab wounds - deeper than they are long

(3) bloody crime scene & unruly

(4) lack of defensive wounds leads to the conclusion  
the person was tied up or unconscious

C. Asphyxia - a variety of conditions that involve:  
interference w/ oxygen intake

(1) @ fire scene - CO poisoning. Presence of soot  
in mouth, nose, & lungs

(2) hanging - ultimate C.O.D. - cessation of blood  
flow to the brain

(a) you will see petechiae - pinpoint hemorrhages  
in the white's of the eyes, along w/ swollen  
& bluish/purple face.

(b) strangulation - the hyoid bone is often broken  
(honey your tongue rest on) & the  
thyroid cartilage is broken.

(c) smothering - placing materials to block mouth &  
nose

D. Gunshot Wounds

(1) appearance of wound can determine how far away  
the gun was (powder residue & stippling)

(2) if suicide, GSR on the victim's hand

(3) mechanism of death

(a) exsanguination - bleeds to death

(b) infection

E. Substance Abuse - can directly cause death or  
complications that can contribute to death

3. Mechanism of Death - specific change in body that  
brought about death

Ex) exsanguination - blood loss

pulmonary arrest - heart stops (arrhythmia)

sepsis - infection

respiratory depression - stopped breathing

asphyxiation - deprived of oxygen.