



**MARICOPA COUNTY
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER
701 W. Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007**

MEDICAL EXAMINER REPORT

DECEDENT: Thomas Christopher Retzlaff

CASE: 21-09240

DATE OF EXAMINATION: 09/03/2021

TIME: 0800 Hours

PERSONS PRESENT AT EXAMINATION:

El Mirage Police Department: Detective Joe Johnston, #3328

CAUSE OF DEATH:

Multiple sharp force injuries

MANNER OF DEATH:

Homicide

HOW INJURY OCCURRED:

Was assaulted

9/27/2021

Date Signed

Amanda Maskovyak, MD

**AMANDA E. MASKOVYAK, M.D.
MEDICAL EXAMINER**

FINDINGS

I. [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

V. Postmortem toxicology performed (see separate report).

SUMMARY AND OPINION

The decedent was a 55-year-old male who was found unresponsive at home on 09/02/2021, [REDACTED]. Emergency personnel responded and death was pronounced on scene.

Based on the above findings, reported circumstances of death, and all other investigative information received to date and as available to me, it is my opinion that the cause of death is multiple sharp force injuries.

The manner of death is homicide.

As with all death investigations, opinions expressed herein are amenable to change should new, reliable, and pertinent information come to light.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office is required by statute (A.R.S. § 11-594(A) (2) and (4)) to certify the cause and manner of death following completion of the death investigation of each case over which it assumes jurisdiction, and to promptly execute a death certificate, on a form provided by the state registrar of vital statistics, indicating the cause and manner of death. The form provided by the state registrar of vital statistics includes five manners of death: homicide, suicide, accident, natural, and undetermined. The determination of manner of death is a forensic determination by the pathologist predicated upon the totality of all then-known forensic evidence and other circumstances surrounding the cause of death; it is not a legal determination of criminal or civil responsibility of any person(s) for the death.

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

Full body postmortem radiographs were obtained prior to examination. The body is in a zippered body pouch secured by a seal bearing the number 0018348.

Clothing and personal effects

The body is received clad in and accompanied by those items as outlined in the property inventory list.

Evidence of medical intervention

None noted.

Evidence of postmortem organ/tissue donation

None noted.

General examination

The unembalmed body is that of a 67 inch, 152 pound adult male. The body is normally developed, adequately-nourished, and appears compatible with the reported age of 55 years.

The scalp is covered by straight, brown hair. Facial hair is shaved. The corneas are clear, the conjunctivae are pale and free of petechiae, the sclerae are white with tache noire, and the irides appear brown. The external ears, nose, and lips are normal in location and formation. The facial bones are intact to palpation. The oral mucosa has no visible lesions. The dentition is natural and in good repair.

The neck and torso are symmetric and free of palpable masses. The abdomen is soft and flat. The back is straight. The anus is patent. The atraumatic external genitalia are those of an adult male with descended testes. The extremities are well-developed and symmetric without visible deformities. All digits are present. The intact fingernails are short and irregular. The toenails are short and clear. The skin presents no significant lesions.

Postmortem changes

Rigor mortis is absent. There is fixed, red-pink posterior lividity. The body is cold.

Identifying marks, tattoos, and scars

A large curvilinear scar is on the lower abdomen. Multiple irregular scars, measuring up to 4 cm, are on the bilateral upper extremities. A large longitudinal scar is on the posterior right arm.

Evidence of injury

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The above injuries, having once been described, will not be referred to below.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

BODY CAVITIES

There is surgical mesh material and staples in the anterior abdominal wall and focally dense abdominal adhesions. There is a hard silicone plastic insert in the subcutaneous soft tissues of the right side of the chest. The organs occupy their normal anatomic position. There are no excess fluid collections or adhesions in the remaining body cavities. The subcutaneous fat of the anterior abdominal wall measures up to 3 cm in thickness.

HEAD

The scalp is retracted and is free of injury. There are no skull fractures. The dura is intact. There is no epidural, subdural, or subarachnoid hemorrhage. The 1450 g brain is covered by thin and delicate meninges. The cerebral hemispheres are symmetric with moderate global edema and softening. There is no evidence of herniation. The cranial nerves are paired and symmetric. The cerebral vasculature shows no aneurysms. Atherosclerotic changes are absent. The cerebral cortical ribbon, underlying white matter, deep nuclei, mammillary bodies, and hippocampi are unremarkable. The ventricular system is symmetric and of normal configuration. The substantia nigra is normally pigmented. The pons, medulla, upper cervical cord, and cerebellum are unremarkable. The base of the skull does not demonstrate any fractures. The atlanto-occipital junction is stable to manipulation and palpation.

NECK

See Evidence of Injury.

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

The pericardium is smooth and glistening. The epicardium is free of fibrosis and there is a normal amount of epicardial fat. The 350 g heart is mildly enlarged in configuration.

There is moderate right ventricular dilation. The coronary arteries arise from normally situated ostia and show right dominance. The left anterior descending, circumflex, and right coronary arteries are patent without evidence of acute thrombosis. The myocardium is uniformly dark red-brown and firm. The cardiac valve leaflets are thin and delicate. Valve circumferences are as follows: Tricuspid valve = 13.5 cm, pulmonic valve = 8 cm, mitral valve = 11 cm and aortic valve = 7 cm. There are no septal defects. The left and right ventricular free walls and septum measure 1.4 cm, 0.4 cm, and 1.3 cm thick, respectively.

The aorta and its major branches are normally distributed without stenosis. The intimal surfaces show minimal atherosclerosis.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The 475 g right lung and 375 g left lung have normal lobation. The pleural surfaces are smooth and glistening. There is scattered anthracotic pigment deposition. The major bronchi are free of obstruction. The lungs are well-expanded. The parenchyma is soft. The anterior cut surfaces are light pink and air-filled and moderately congested posteriorly. The pulmonary arteries are free of thromboemboli.

HEPATOBIILIARY SYSTEM

The 975 g liver has a smooth and intact capsule. The liver configuration is normal. The parenchyma is tan-brown and homogeneous. The gallbladder contains thin-orange bile without calculi. The wall is thin, and the mucosa is unremarkable.

LYMPHORETICULAR SYSTEM

The 175 g spleen has a smooth, purple-grey, and intact capsule. The parenchyma is maroon-red and soft. No abnormal lymph nodes are encountered.

GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM

The esophagus is lined by intact smooth mucosa. The gastro-esophageal junction is distinct. The stomach contains approximately 75 mL of dark brown fluid and partially digested food particles. The gastric mucosa shows autolysis. There are no areas of ulceration in the stomach or proximal duodenum. The remainder of the small intestines and the colon are externally unremarkable. The appendix is present. The pancreas is normally lobulated, and the parenchyma is firm, tan, and without focal lesions.

GENITOURINARY SYSTEM

The 125 g right and 125 g left kidneys are symmetric. The subcapsular surfaces are smooth. The cortices are of normal thickness. The medullae, collecting systems, and ureters are unremarkable. The urinary bladder is of normal configuration. The mucosa is tan and smooth. There is approximately 75 mL of yellow urine.

The prostate gland is of normal configuration with firm tan-pink parenchyma. The seminal vesicles are unremarkable.

ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

The thyroid and adrenal glands are normal in size, shape, and location. The pituitary gland is externally unremarkable.

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM

The bony framework, supporting musculature, and soft tissues are otherwise grossly normal.

EVIDENCE

Evidence collected at the time of autopsy and released to Detective Joe Johnston, #3328 of the El Mirage Police Department: Left and right hand bags, left and right fingernail clippings with clippers, blood blot, clothing, and fingerprint card.

Toxicology

Samples of iliac blood, urine, vitreous fluid, and liver are collected and submitted for analysis (see also separate toxicology report).

AEM/Diskriter
D: 09/03/2021
T: 09/07/2021