

DEATH AS A RESULT OF VIOLENT ASPHYXIA IN AUTOPSY REPORTS OF WROCLAW MEDICAL UNIVERSITY IN 2010

Jakub Trnka¹, Marcin Gesicki¹, Robert Suslo¹, Jędrzej Siuta¹, Jarosław Drobnik², Iwona Pirogowicz³

¹Forensic Medicine Department, ²Family Medicine Department, and ³ Hygiene Department, Medical University of Wrocław, Poland; jtrnka@aol.pl

Introduction: Violent asphyxia constitutes a quite common cause of death. It can be subdivided into various kinds according to mechanism, so the resuscitation techniques are different in each case. **Material and Methods:** Autopsy reports of the Department of Forensic Medicine of Medical University in Wrocław of 2010 concerning the established cause of death was violent asphyxia were analyzed. **Results:** In the year 2010 among the 890 performed autopsies there were 164 cases when the established cause of death was violent asphyxia of a kind. Among them there were cases of drowning, choking on food, gastric fluid or blood (also resulting from complications of surgical procedures that were performed earlier), hangings, ligature and manual strangulations, immobilization of the chest (positional asphyxia), and the environmental asphyxia because of removal of the oxygen-rich air by some other gas. The most common cause of death in the analyzed group was hanging, mostly suicidal hangings of alcohol-intoxicated males. There were some cases of deaths due to autoerotic asphyxia gone wrong. There were also some cases, when there were concurrence of the causes of death, including drowning with subsequent choking with gastric fluids or mud. In case of violent asphyxia it is crucial to immediately undertake actions needed to savior the central nervous system from imminent hypoxia - by removing the noose from the neck and suction the fluids from the mouth and bronchial tree - but even in the case of early started proper medical treatment in most analyzed cases there were negative outcomes because of critical ischemia of the brain, with deaths established sometimes after several days spent in the intensive care units, without any significant connection to the deceased gender or age.

Conclusions: Violent asphyxia is a quite commonly established cause of death in the practice of forensic pathologists - among all the autopsies performed in 2010 every sixth was of asphyxia victim. The most common type of deceased was an alcohol intoxicated male dead because of hanging. Even immediate medical help aimed at stopping central nervous system hypoxia and subsequent intensive medical treatment in the intensive care unit do not guarantee positive therapeutic outcome.