

Glendale Police Department's D.V. Strangulation Pilot Project 2011-2012

*In Cooperation with the Maricopa
County Attorney's Office – Family
Violence Bureau and Scottsdale
Health Care*

Recent History

- Aggravated Assault by Strangulation 13-1204.B became law as a class 4 felony and added to the Domestic Violence Statute July 29, 2010.
- The statute defines strangulation as either intentionally or knowingly impeding the normal breathing or circulation of blood of another person by applying pressure to the throat or neck or by obstructing the nose and mouth either manually or through use of an instrument.
- The statute also requires the presence of a relationship defined in the DV Statute 13-3601.
- During a sample 6-month period from May 1 – Oct 31, 2011 officers and detectives from Glendale PD submitted 38 cases of Agg. Assault by Strangulation to the Maricopa County Attorneys Office for prosecution. Of those 38 only 8 cases were presented for trial with the remaining 30 being turned down to the City Prosecutor's Office to face misdemeanor assault charges. The overwhelming reason for the 79% turndown rate was a lack of corroborating medical evidence to support the strangulation charge.

Glendale PD DV Strangulation Pilot Project

- Beginning on December 1, 2011 Glendale PD along with Chandler PD will be participating in cooperation with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office – Family Violence Bureau and Forensic Nurse Examiners from Scottsdale Health Care to provide thorough forensic medical evaluations for DV strangulation victims. This will provide better medical corroborative evidence to support the charging of these cases, which in turn, will better serve these domestic violence victims by increasing the amount of successful prosecutions.
- Funding for these examinations is being paid by the Maricopa County Attorney's Office with the hope of obtaining full time funding for these exams at the conclusion of the pilot project provided the results of the project justify the expenses.
- Statistics are being kept by the Family Violence Unit to provide to the MCAO for measuring the project's effectiveness.

San Diego Strangulation Study

- The San Diego Police Department conducted a study of 300 strangulation cases in 1995. The study found the following information from those cases:
- 99% of the suspects were men
- There was a history of Domestic Violence in 90% of those cases
- Only 3% of the victims sought medical attention
- In 62% of these cases, no visible injury could be documented

Other Studies on Strangulation

- A 2001 study by Wilbur et al. of 62 women in Los Angeles and Dallas found that almost 70% had been strangled in the past.
 - Average time in relationship before initial strangulation was 5.2 years
 - Average length of abuse prior to initial strangulation was 3.1 years
 - 87% were threatened with death during the strangulation event and 70% believed that they were actually going to die during it.
 - The study also found that the strangulations symptoms increased as the number of strangulation incidents increased. (cumulative effect?)
- George McClane in his study found that victims experience 4 stages in a prolonged strangulation event:
 - Denial – “I can’t believe this is happening to me”
 - Realization – “This is actually happening to me”
 - Primal – Struggle to preserve life
 - Resignation - “I am going to die, I hope my kids will be ok, I hope someone will catch him, etc.”

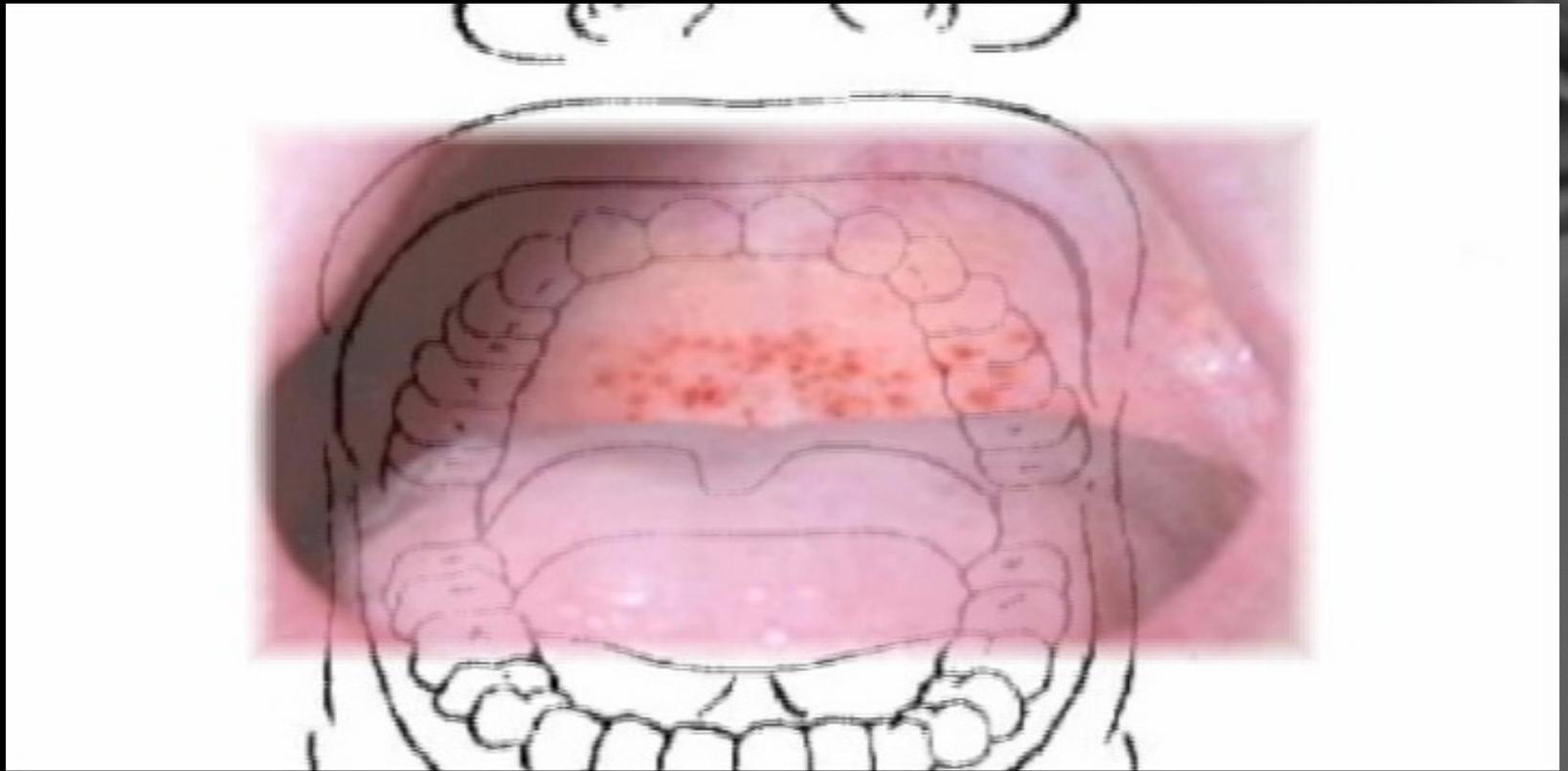
Fatality of Strangulation

- Immediate Death from Strangulation can occur by 1 of 4 mechanisms:
 - Cardiac arrhythmia provoked by pressure on the carotid artery nerve ganglion causing cardiac arrest.
 - Pressure obstruction of the carotid arteries causing loss of oxygenated blood to the brain
 - Pressure on the jugular veins preventing venous blood flow from leaving the brain causing backup of blood flow in the brain leading to unconsciousness, depressed respirations and asphyxia
 - Pressure obstruction of the larynx cuts off airflow causing asphyxia
- Delayed Death from Strangulation can occur by:
 - Carotid Artery dissection – tear in artery causing blood clot which can dislodge later and cause stroke
 - Respiratory complications – aspiration pneumonia (vomit usually), and acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Importance of Forensic Exam

- Gives prosecutors that medical corroboration that the event occurred.
- Gives the victim a medical evaluation for potential emergency follow up
- Provided high tech documentation for improved jury response at trial and to increase the number of plead cases.
- Glendale PD as of 8/14/12 has conducted investigations on 77 cases since December 2011. So far we have made 53 arrests, with 10 convictions due to pleas. 11 victims declined to participate in an exam.
- 29 cases have been turned down to the city prosecutor as misdemeanor assaults and disorderly conducts. 37% turndown rate as compared to 79% prior to the project. Conversely 63% of our cases are being filed.
- Have seen bonds set for suspects as high as \$125k and DOC sentences as long as 7.5 years

Signs and Symptoms Found by Exam



Petechiae



Other Signs and Symptoms

- Voice Changes
- Difficulty Swallowing
- Psychiatric - emotional
- If rendered unconscious – loss of bowel or bladder control
- Defensive Scratch marks on neck or face – Primal fight to preserve life
 - Bruising under chin
- Offensive wounds on suspect – Primal fight to preserve life
- Ears ringing
- Light headedness
- Nausea/vomitting
- Finger touch pad bruising/ligature marks
- Neck Swelling

Frequently Asked Questions

- How much time can pass before a forensic exam is no longer applicable?
 - Forensic exams can be conducted up to 120 hours after the incident.
- Should I just wait then and tell the victim to come into the center during normal business hours?
 - **No**, victims of domestic violence are often intimidated by their abusers and could be reluctant to cooperate with police at a later time. Victims should be brought into the advocacy center immediately as some physical evidence could also be lost through showering, changing clothes, etc. The sooner they can be brought in the more likely evidence of the event will be preserved and the more likely they will be willing to have the exam.
- What if the victim is being transported to the hospital because of their injuries and can't come into the advocacy center?
 - Advise the Family Violence Detective of the hospital the victim is being transported to during the initial call-out and they will in turn call out the forensic nurse directly to that hospital to conduct the exam.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Can the victim have a friend or family member come with them to the advocacy center for support?
 - Yes, there is a medical waiting room for friends and family members downstairs by the break room at the center. They will not be allowed in the exam room however and there is limited room so only one or two allowed.
- Can the victim have a friend or family member take them home after the exam?
 - Yes, once the exam is complete they are allowed to leave and can leave with friends or family members or our Victim's Assistance Personnel can transport them home as well if requested.
- Does the age of the victim matter?
 - No, the forensic exam is non-invasive and consists of different methods from medical questioning and observation, DNA transfer swabs, to Ultra High Resolution and possibly Alternate Light Source Photography. (If a parent or guardian is the abuser, and another parent or guardian cannot or does not authorize the exam, CPS should be notified and should authorize the exam after a temporary custody notice is approved)

Frequently Asked Questions

- If the forensic exam includes photography does Patrol still need to take photographs of the victim?
 - Yes, it is still important to capture how the victim looked at the scene as well as capturing the injury progression in the days to follow using the same style camera system, which would be conducted with cameras used by both Patrol and detectives.
- Can the victim still voluntarily come in for an exam and not want to press charges on the suspect?
 - Yes, due to the DV nature of the charges the state becomes the victim representative and will prosecute on behalf of the victim. As long as the victim is willing to complete the exam it will be performed. The exam just gives the state more evidence that can be used in an evidence-based prosecution. (The agreement with the MCAO is that they will move forward with cases that have enough corroborative evidence to substantiate the charge even without the victim's testimony and these forensic nurse exams and statements can still be used in those cases)

Medical Training on Strangulation

- Use the embedded link to watch a 38-minute video on strangulation provided by Aequitas.
- You will need to register your own log in at the website prior to viewing.
- [Aequitas Strangulation Training](#)
- Questions about the DV Strangulation Pilot Project can be directed to Sgt. Patrick Beumler with the Family Violence Unit. RDO's SSM, hours 0700-1700, Office 623-930-3113, Cell 623-698-2426.
- [Thank you](#)