

The importance of the interaction between forensic and criminal experts in establishing the causes of death regional technical-scientific police precinct of Niterói – state of Rio of January

Abstract

The Authors discuss the importance of the interaction between the Forensic Expert and the Criminal Expert in the elucidation of cases of death. By way of example, they also present a case in which the interaction between the Experts was fundamental for the elucidation of the dynamics of a motorcycle accident that resulted in death.

Keywords: violent deaths, interaction, elucidation

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Introduction

This is an extremely important topic for the elucidation of the dynamics, means and causes resulting in death, especially in cases of violent death, whether by crime, suicide, or accident. In Brazil, with the exception of the State of Rio de Janeiro where, until 2019, the Homicide Police Precincts had a team formed by a Criminal Expert, a Forensic Expert and a Fingerprint Expert,¹ the locations of violent death are examined by a Criminal Expert, and the necropsy is carried out by Forensic Experts (GELC). Unfortunately, in most cases, the latter carry out their activities in an isolated, compartmentalized way, resulting in delays and potential misjudgment, both in the interpretation of the environment, the dynamics, as well as the cause, in the investigation of violent deaths.

The case to be presented here is proof of the need for joint work between the criminal expert and the forensic expert. This is a death that occurred during the night, on a road location with poor lighting and adverse conditions.

When examining the victim at the scene, due to the injuries found on the body, it was hypothesized that they had been caused by firearm projectiles, which was only clarified when the images of the location were transmitted to the forensic expert who could then define the etiology of the injuries.

This article aims to raise the discussion of the importance of the interaction between the Forensic Expert and the Criminal Expert, in

facilitating the elucidation of the dynamics, means and cause of violent deaths.

Material and methods

The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate, in a clear and unequivocal way, the need for interaction between the Forensic Expert and the Criminal Expert, to facilitate the elucidation of the dynamics, means and cause of violent deaths.

Case presentation

By way of example, the case of an automobile accident is presented, in which the interaction between the experts enabled not only the identification of the means, the cause and, especially, the dynamics of the event. The case in question took place in the State of Rio de Janeiro, resulting from an automobile accident, involving a motorcycle with two victims – one fatal – at the scene of the accident, and another with serious injuries, transported by the Military Fire Brigade of the State of Rio de Janeiro to a hospital of renown.

At the scene, the Criminal Expert responsible, for the preparation of her report, took several photographs and one of these is provided below.

In the photograph to the right, we present the motorcycle involved in the accident, which was made available to the Forensic Expert when the autopsy was performed.



On closer inspection, we can analyze in greater detail the existing features of the handlebars of this motorcycle.



If we look more closely, we can identify the presence of two pairs of screws, arranged in parallel, in the center of the structure (highlighted in blue).

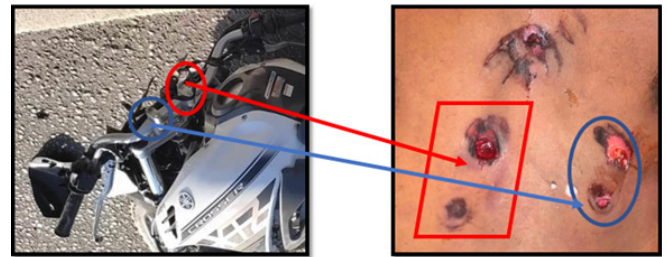
When performing the necropsy examination and after cleaning the corpse, the Medical Examiner, found the following wounds, arranged on the frontal surface of the upper third of the thorax.



Initially, we can conclude that they are wounds that have a blunt etiology, being described, individually, using only the “*visum et repertum*.” However, the interpretation of the wounds goes to another level, when compared with the photograph sent by the Criminal Expert. With the help of this photograph, one can reach a conclusion on the etiology of the object that caused the wounds.

In the following presentation, we will demonstrate, without any doubt, the relationship between the components of the handlebars of the motorcycle involved in the accident, and the wounds found on the corpse. The first set of screws, highlighted in blue, perfectly matches the first group of wounds found on the corpse, also highlighted in blue.

The second set of screws, highlighted in red, perfectly matches the second group of wounds found on the corpse, also highlighted in red.



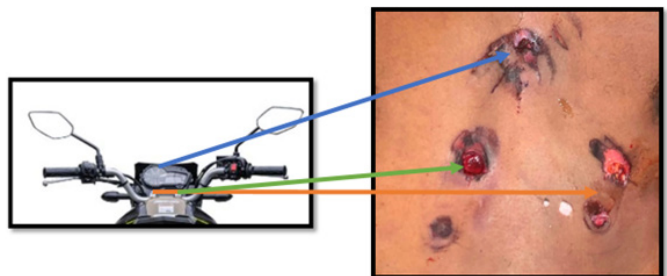
From what is presented here, it can be inferred that the structures found on the handlebars of the motorcycle were the bulkhead on which the victim’s body was projected, imprinting a perfect “signature” on it.

There is still a need to explain the existing wound in a position above those described.

As the Criminal Expert had provided a photograph of the location of the event, it was possible to identify the brand and type of the motorcycle involved and, with this information, we looked for images, on the internet,² of the handlebars of the model under scrutiny; it was possible to identify the speedometer (circled in green), which on the motorcycle involved in the accident was no longer in its regular position (circled in red), damaged and torn off by the impact of the victim’s body against it.



In the photographs provided below, we demonstrate the perfect relationship between the motorcycle’s speedometer and the wound found on the body of the corpse (blue arrow), as well as the set of screws and the corresponding wounds (red and green arrows).



It should be stressed that the model used is that of an intact motorcycle.

Discussion

The case presented here demonstrates the non-negotiable need for perfect understanding and communication between those carrying out the site examination and those carrying out the autopsy examination. Citing once again the GELC teams, in which all Experts attend the scene of the homicide, it is our opinion that, in all cases of violent death, complete teams should attend the event site, as well as participate in the autopsy examination and prepare a single report where, after exhaustive discussion, all necessary information was listed.

In the words of Dr. Leví Inimá de Miranda,³ citing Cobra (1987), the place of death, is the first major source of material or objective

evidence – where useful materials can be found to verify the “modus operandi.” Citing the same author again, with our additions, the joint, harmonious and integrated work between Forensic and Criminal Experts is a “sine qua non” condition for a perfect understanding of the dynamics, means and cause of violent deaths, ensuring, in this way, that justice is done, increasing the reliability of existing institutions.

Conclusion

The importance of presenting this work is based on the need for discussion to achieve greater integration between the Criminal Expert and the Forensic Expert. The example presented here clearly demonstrates the importance of this rapport and, all the more so, in the light of what was established in the autopsy findings, with the verification of the causes of the wounds found, it was possible for the Criminal Expert to establish who was driving and who was the passenger on the motorcycle.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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