

Homicide in Nellore, A 2-Year Review

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Abstract: Violence is a significant public health problem. Thus, so as to prevent this problem, homicide, the severest form of violence depriving a human being of his right to live, deserves a detailed examination.

This study is a retrospective research examining the 2951 cases of medicolegal autopsies in Nellore during a period of 2 years (2019–2021). Among these cases, 620, which were determined to be homicidal, were taken into the scope of this study. The cases were examined with respect to sex, age groups, the method used during the act of homicide, the number and the localization of the wounds on the body.

A total of 620 (21%) of the medicolegal autopsies conducted within this period were homicides. Of these cases, 515 (83.06%) were male and 105 (16.94%) female, and the rate of the males to females was 4.9; 72.74% of the victims were between the ages of 21 and 50. It was seen that 54.83% of the homicides involved firearms, while 35.16% of the victims were stabbed to death with a cutting object. It was also determined that the victims suffered a single wound in 47.35% of firearm-related murders and 29.35% of stabbings resulted in death. Alcohol was found in the blood of 7.58% of the homicide victims, while none had any illicit drugs.

Key Words: homicide, autopsy, retrospective,

Adana is the fourth largest city of Turkey, located in the south of the country. With a population of 1,849,000, the city has been experiencing significant migration from rural regions (the rate of population increase was 16% between 1997 and 2000).¹ Socioeconomic problems being experienced in our country in recent years have become particularly

female, the rate of males to females being 4.9. The distribution of the cases with respect to years, age, and sex is shown in Table 2.

It was determined that 54.83% (340 cases) of the

Statistical Analysis

The data obtained were evaluated on Epi Info 2000

significant in this city due to massive migration. Acts of violence have also been increasing in parallel with the increase in socioeconomic problems. It is a globally accepted fact that acts of violence, including homicide cases, have been increasing and that violence has become a serious problem for the whole world in late years.²⁻⁴ Violence continues to pose a threat as a significant public health problem. So, homicide, the severest form of violence depriving a human being of his right to live, deserves a detailed examination to prevent violence.

Medicolegal autopsies not only give the cause, origin, and manner of death but also make available important statistical data related to legal incidents in the cities and regions where the autopsies are conducted. According to Turkish laws in unnatural or suspected deaths, a body is either issued an official burial certificate and buried or given a written authorization for autopsy following a medicolegal examination. The medicolegal examination is carried out by a team including a physician and public prosecutor. It is known that murders have a significant share in medicolegal autopsies and also maintain a special importance within the general criminal profile of society.^{2,5,6}

The objective of this study is to present details of murder cases in Adana on which medicolegal autopsies were conducted.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of 2951 cases on which autopsies were conducted at the Ministry of Justice Forensic Medicine Institution Nellore, Morgue Specialty Office between 2019 and 2021 were examined retrospectively. Cases determined to be murders according to examination at the scene of the incident, records of the public prosecutor's office, and autopsy findings were taken into the scope of study. These cases were examined with respect to their sex, age groups, the objects (weapons) causing death, the wounds found on the body, and localization of wounds. Furthermore, toxicologic analyses that are routinely conducted during the autopsies of the cases were examined.

Most of the victims, a total of 188 cases (30.32%), were found to be within the 21 to 30 age group. Five hundred fifteen (83.06%) of the cases were male and 105 (16.94%) homicides involved firearms. Over the period of 5 years, the number of firearm-related deaths was 594, 57.23% of which were of homicidal origin. Of the 340 cases that involved firearms, 91 were related to shotgun wounds and the remaining 249 cases involved use of handguns. Stabbing objects take the second place in homicides, with 35.16%. No statistical significance was determined in the frequency of use of Statcalc program using a χ^2 test on a multiple contingency table.

Findings

Six hundred twenty (21%) of the 2951 medicolegal autopsies conducted in the course of 5 years were determined to be associated with homicides. The distributions of cases of homicidal origin are given in Table 1. The ages of the victims were found to be between 2 days and 77 years, the average age being 38.42 years.

murder weapons by years. The distribution of the objects

in the other cases. So as to achieve clarity in classification, the body was divided into 5 areas for examination (head, neck, thorax, abdomen, and extremities). The distribution of the single wounds found on the bodies with respect to body localizations is given in Table 4. The great number of firearm-related wounds in the head and the number of stabbing wounds in the extremities were found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 38.84$, $P = 0.0000$). Cases having 6 or more wounds on their bodies were divided into 6 groups according to the number of wounds (Table 5). Use of a stabbing object in the cases having 6 or more wounds was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 57.14$, $P = 0.0000$).

It was observed that the highest number of wounds caused by stabbing on a single body was 80 (a 42-year-old woman), and the highest number of bullet holes in body was 20 (a 28-year-old man). A total of 888 bullet wounds were found in 340 victims killed by firearm wounds and a total of 1521 stabbing wounds in 218 victims who were stabbed to death. It was seen that most of the wounds resulting from shooting or stabbing were located in the thorax region. The distribution of the wounds by the body locations was shown in Table 6. The great number of firearm wounds in the head and that of stabbing wounds in the extremities and the abdomen was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 178.43$, $P = 0.0000$).

While the number of firearm wounds per case was 2.61 on the average, the number of stabbing wounds per case had an average of 6.97. Twenty-nine (8.52%) of the bullet

used in homicides by years is given in Table 3.

In 2 of the cases, a firearm and a stabbing object were used together; in 3 cases, firearm wounds were accompanied by serious blunt-trauma lesions; and in 11 cases, stabbing wounds were found together with serious blunt-trauma lesion. It was also seen that the victims suffered a single wound in 161 (47.35%) of the 340 homicide cases involving firearms. A single wound was also found on the bodies of the 64 (29.35%) of the 218 stabbings that resulted in death. The number of wounds determined on the body was more than 1

wounds were found to be consecutive shot, and 24 (7.05%) of the shots were made at a close range.

Ethyl alcohol was detected in the blood of 7.58% (47 cases) of the victims. The highest level of alcohol in the blood was 304 mg/dL (Table 7). No illicit drugs were encountered in the victims.

DISCUSSION

Violence-related behavior among immigrants and homeless people has risen in late years. It has been reported that the rate of young people aged 15 to 19 accused of homicide rises on a yearly basis and causes of death among adolescents and the first place among ethnic groups.⁶⁻¹⁰ Furthermore, according to a study carried out by Demetriades et al² in Los Angeles, homicide rose to the first place among deaths resulting from major trauma, followed by traffic accidents, which indicates that violence-related deaths constitute an important public health problem.

It was seen in our study that the annual homicide rate among the medicolegal autopsies conducted between 1997 and 2001 in Adana was 214. In a study carried out earlier in our province (between 1992 and 1995), the mean annual number of autopsies was reported as 129.³ Considering the increase in population, it can be stated that the number of homicide cases has declined in the province of Adana.

CONCLUSION ring about a sharp decline, if not completely eliminate, in the deaths resulting from use of weapons.

Putting forward the details related to deaths of homicidal origin will contribute to drawing the attention of the public, as well as the authorities, keeping the problem on the public agenda and determining and implementing the measures to be taken. This will also make valuable contributions to the improvement of the services rendered by preventive medicine.

Expecting the elimination of actions involving violence and their widespread damages that could lead to death of people could be considered a utopia. However, what is emphasized and put forward in studies is the fact that an increase in crimes involving use of weapons is inevitable in parallel of the availability of an interest in these weapons.

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