

Forensic Science

Students need to read history and answer questions on a separate sheet.

A "SCREWED UP" GUNSHOT WOUND CASE

Case History

After an exchange of words at a fast food restaurant, two carloads of young males met in a poorly lighted motel parking lot for further discussion. A 19-year old from one car was approaching the group exiting from the other care when he announced, "They've got knives."

His companion returned to their car and grabbed a .38 caliber revolver. When he turned back to his friend, he saw that he was surrounded by the occupants of the other car. He fired two shots toward the group. The 19-year old immediately fell to the ground and the occupants of the other car beat a hasty retreat.

Paramedics arrived within 10 minutes to find the 19-year old unconscious and bleeding from two wounds, one in each temple. He was transported and admitted to University Hospital with a diagnosis of perforating gunshot wound of the head. He was placed on a respirator and his companion was jailed and charged with attempted murder.

The police detective asked the medical investigator to examine the injured 19-year old in the hospital to see if he could tell if the wounds were consistent or inconsistent with bullet wounds from a .38 caliber handgun.

The medical examiner first reviewed the medical record at the hospital. The admitting physician described small round gunshot wounds of each temple. He did not measure the wounds or describe them in detail. The investigator reviewed the X-ray of the head which revealed no bullet or lead fragments. He then examined the injured man and found both temple wounds had been tightly sutured by the attending surgeon.

Study Questions

What difficulties exist in interpretation of gunshot wounds of live victims in hospitals?

2. What would you tell the police detective?

\What information about gunshot wounds - caliber size, range of fire, type of ammunition - can be determined by looking at X-rays?

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