



GODOY

MEDICAL FORENSICS
INCORPORATED

Summary of Findings

In this case, the defendant was being charged with felony strangulation. I educated the court that scratch marks on the neck of strangulation victims are most often self-inflicted, and the pathophysiology behind low oxygen levels, or hypoxia. **In Strangulation cases, it is important to take note of any marks on the victim's neck, but the evidence of strangulation lies in the signs and symptoms of hypoxia.**

Case Study: Strangulation...What does the evidence show?

All names have been changed

Mr. Smith, the defendant, was accused of strangling Ms. Thomas for a period of 15 seconds, during which time she was unable to breathe. Nine days after the incident, Ms. Thomas provided a written statement in which she stated that she began to lose her hearing and vision during the assault, and was dizzy and unbalanced afterwards.

Fingernail Scratches

Photos (shown below) indicate red linear marks to the back of her neck. In strangulation cases, **scratches to the neck are often self-inflicted from the victim trying to pull the assailant's hands off their neck.** Many strangulation victims show no sign of injury to their neck, so red marks or bruises cannot be used to definitively prove or disprove a strangulation allegation.



Hypoxia

Her complaints of dizziness and vision/hearing changes are consistent with hypoxia and supported her allegations of strangulation. The state asked questions about how hypoxia can result from strangulation, and the defense asked questions relating to other potential causes of hypoxia, including emotional responses and high intensity exercise.