

Case Report

Sudden Slap: Sudden Death

¹Surendar Jakkam, ²G.S.R.K.G. Ranga Rao, ³G.K.V. Prasad

Abstract

A female unconscious patient aged about 72 years brought to the Govt. General Hospital of Rangaraya Medical College, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh with a history of slap over the cheek. After examination by causality doctors, declared dead. Body was send to the mortuary same hospital. This was the result of a petty quarrel between two persons for theft of mangoes, into which this old lady entered. She got a slap on her cheek. Suddenly she fell down and found dead. Autopsy was conducted on 06/08/2014, in the same hospital's after receiving all necessary documents from the police people. On examination, there were no external and internal injuries found. With no positive post-mortem findings and presence of history of slap over cheek indicating that it is a case of sudden death due to vaso-vagal shock which occurred by stimulation of baroreceptors situated at the level of angle of mandible.

Key Words: Old lady, Sudden slap, Cheek, Vaso vagal shock

Introduction:

Establishing the cause of death in spot death cases is always a mammoth task for an autopsy doctor, especially when it is brought as a murder case. No external injuries over the body make the task much more difficult.

Case History:

A female aged about 72 years, native of Kakinada, was slapped on her cheek and fell down and died on the spot on 06/08/2014, at about 09:30am. This is the result of a petty quarrel between two persons for the theft of mangoes. To subside the quarrel between two persons, entered this old lady, got a slap over her cheek and fell down and died on the spot. The deceased was immediately shifted to GGH casualty by 108 ambulances, where she was declared brought dead. Police were intimated and the body was shifted to mortuary for post mortem examination.

Autopsy Findings:

Ante-mortem External and internal Injuries: Nil. On histo-pathological examination of the viscera, no abnormality was detected.

Chemical analysis by RFSL revealed no toxin or poison. The Death was due "vaso-vagal shock".

Discussion:

A female aged 72 years got a slap on her cheek and fell down right on the spot. There were no external injuries and no internal injuries. Histo-pathological examination of viscera was also negative so in this case, we may think of vasovagal shock due to slap (pressure) over baroreceptors situated in the carotid sinuses, carotid sheaths, and carotid body of internal carotid artery (located about the level of angle of mandible). Stimulation of this vital center inhibits the heart function via parasympathetic nervous system. This condition also precipitated by old age due to low voluntary cerebral control of reflex responses in old age. [1-3]

Conclusion:

To conclude in this case, the cause of death could be associated with inhibition of vital system of the body i.e. cardio vascular due to stimulation of vagus nerve. In such cases where post-mortem findings are negative, it is very difficult for a Forensic expert to opine about the cause of death. We should be very careful to search any positive findings and to establish a document to present in the court or law. In such cases, we should have sufficient visual evidences also. [4, 5]

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Corresponding Author:

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Forensic Medicine, KIMS&RF, Amalapuram, East Godavari, AP
E-mail: surenderjakkam@gmail.com

²Associate Professor,

³Professor,

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