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Forensic Medicine

Determine the Prevalence and Pattern of Killings in Quetta, Balochistan

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ABSTRACT

Background: Homicide is defined as Human life slaughter of a human being by the conduct of another human being. This study was conducted to determine the pattern of killing in Quetta.

Study Design: Observational study

Place and Duration of Study: All medico-legal autopsy reports conducted in Civil Hospital Quetta, by Department of Forensic Medicine, Bolan Medical College, Quetta, from 1st January, 2009 to 31st December, 2010 and police in quest reports of the respective cases were studied.

Materials and Methods: All police inquest reports of the respective medico-legal autopsies were also made part of this study. Preformed were used to record Medico-legal case number, date, day and time of arrival of dead body and autopsy, brought by police or relatives cause of death, type of weapon used, type and site of injuries, place of occurrence, mode, manner and cause of death.

Results: A total of 200 cases of medico-legal autopsies were studied, out of which 113 were declared as homicidal deaths. The most common weapons used for homicide were Automatic firearm weapons. The most affected age group was 31 to 40 years followed by21 to 30 years and11 to 20 years.

Conclusion: The cases of homicide in district Quetta are mostly by firearm weapons. Male are affected more than females. The most common age group affected is 31 to 40 years.

Key Words: Homicide, Automatic Firearms, site of injury.

INTRODUCTION

The history of homicide is as old as the man itself, there has been consistent progress in the development of weapons used for homicide i.e. wooden and stone made weapons, copper and iron made weapons (sword, dagger, and arrows) and then came the firearms weapons – the guns and bombs. Firearms are in use for nearly a thousand years and tremendous improvement is achieved in their design, range and efficacy.

Instruments (weapons) purposely designed for Assault progressed rapidly. With the discovery of gunpowder came progressively more powerful Firearms. By definition weapon is an article made or adapted for causing bodily hurt.[1]

Conduct that was grossly negligent given the risk of death and did kill is manslaughter. Conduct taking the form of an unlawful act involving a danger of some harm that resulted in death is manslaughter.[2]

At present there are manually operated, semi-automatic and fully automatic firearm weapons of both low and high velocity types.[3-4]

Ever since the man started living in society laws were needed to control and regulate the conduct of every individual. Homicide has been considered a major crime and various severe punishments have been introduced and practiced to prevent this crime, these punishments were so severe that the name "Capital Punishment" was assigned to it. These punishments are still part of our judicial system i.e. death by hanging, death by beheading, death by electrocution and death by lethal poisons, etc. Even such severe punishments fail to prevent homicide completely from any society but efforts can be made, beside these punishments, to lower down the rate of homicide, this has been achieved remarkably in Brazil through firearms control by legislations and social education.[5-6]

On international level homicide rates are in the range of 1 to 15 per 100,000 of population per year. It is less than 1 per 100,000 of population per year in Egypt, Greece and England while it is 15 or more per 100,000 of population per year in Mexico and Columbia. In USA it was 6.1 per 100,000 of population per year in the year 2000.[7]

In Pakistan firearms related deaths are common. Pakistan has a tribal belt and has borders with war torn Afghanistan. Traditionally all types of sophisticated weapons are manufactured in these tribal areas which are supplied all over the country without much control.[8] This study was conducted to determine the prevalence and pattern of killing in Quetta.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All medico-legal autopsy reports of all autopsies conducted at Civil Hospital Quetta in following 02 years, from 1st January, 2009 to 31st December, 2010, were studied. All police inquest reports of the respective medico-legal autopsies were also made part

of this study. Preformed were used to record Medico-legal case number, date, day and time of arrival of dead body and autopsy, brought by police or relatives cause of death, type of weapon used, type and site of injuries, place of occurrence, mode, manner and cause of death.

RESULTS

A total of 200 cases of medico-legal autopsies were studied, out of which 113 were declared as homicidal deaths. The most affected age group was 31 to 40 years followed by 21 to 30 years and 41 to 50 years. Male to female ratio was 17:15% (Table 1).

Firearms were the most commonly used weapon. The sites of injury in (Table 2) respectively.

Table No.1: Male to female ratio

Age in years	Male	Female	%age	Total
<10	0	0	00	0
11-20	04	0	04	04
21-30	22	04	23	26
31-40	43	09	45	52
41-50	17	02	18	19
51-60	07	00	07	07
>60	03	02	03	05
Total	96	17	100	113

Table No.2: Site of firearm injury according the group

Age (years)	Head Neck	Chest	Head Neck & Chest	Chest & upper limb	Chest & Abdomen	Abdomen	Abdomen & lower limb	Lower Limb
11-20	01	01	01	01	00	00	00	00
21-30	09	06	01	02	01	02	03	02
31-40	17	13	06	02	02	11	01	00
41-50	11	03	03	00	02	00	00	00
51-60	04	01	02	00	00	00	00	00
>60	02	01	00	01	01	00	00	00
Total	44	25	13	06	06	13	04	02
Percentage	39%	22%	11%	5%	5%	12%	4%	2%

DISCUSSION

The main reasons for homicide in Quetta are low literacy rate, ethnic and sectarian strife, poverty, property disputes and sudden provocation at pity matters. Mostly people get suddenly provocative over pity maters and cause fatalities without thinking about the consequences. The other causes of homicide are old family feuds, revenge and traditional honor killings.[9-10]

Injuries from firearms are a major problem that severely affects the victims, families, social setup, health care system and criminal justice. Such injuries are common in Pakistan. Despite the magnitude of this problem, little is known about the epidemiologic characteristics of these injuries. The observations of present study are concurrent to another local study from district DI Khan that reported gunshot injuries as the leading cause of homicidal deaths i.e. up to 58.8%.[11]

In contrast to our study, in Denmark and New Zealand, studies showed that suicides accounted for the vast majority of firearm fatalities, i.e. 80% and 75.5% respectively.[12-13]

Other reasons include insufficiently equipped police, old and poor methods of police investigations and poor medico-legal evidence due to lack of modern equipment and shortage of medico-legal experts. These directly affect the judicial proceedings in the courts of law so blocking the fair delivery of justice which results in a chain of revenge killings since people take law into their own hands and this vicious circle continues.

However, a study from Karachi conducted in 2002 showed that Road Traffic Accidents equaled the number of homicides by firearm injuries.[14]

Most forensic reports show that firearms are mainly used in homicidal deaths.[15]

CONCLUSION

The causes of homicide in Quetta are mostly by firearm weapons. Male are affected more than females. The most common age group affected is 31 to 40 years.

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