

This 44 year old widow was living by herself. According to her physician, she never was seriously ill. She was found dead in bed. The back door of the house was open. The body was lying with the head jammed against the headboard of the bed. Except for the head and neck, the body was covered with bed sheet and blanket which showed no derangement. The pillow was under the chest and the pajama pants were pulled down in the back. One button of the pajama top was torn off together with a religious medal. The bed sheet showed some staining with blood which was of a type other than that of the deceased. There was no derangement of the contents of the room. The handbag of the deceased was missing.

One day later a medicolegal autopsy was performed. The body measured 5' 4" in length and weighed 132 lbs. A small amount of serosanguinous fluid had drained out of the left corner of the mouth. Over the midportion of the helix of the right ear, there was a single small excoriated area; and a 1 centimeter long superficial bruise was found over the right anterior neck. The lips and the tongue showed no pathology. The upper canines and incisors were covered with chewing gum, which was embedded deep between the teeth. There were no external alterations indicating a fight. The external genitalia showed no bruises or lacerations. Sperms were present in the vagina. Over the superior horn of the thyroid cartilage, there were submucosal fresh hemorrhages. Similar hemorrhages were found on the posterior surface of the epiglottis. Histologically, there was also some fresh hemorrhage between the submucosa and muscle layer in the area of the larynx. The lungs were edematous, weighing 520 and 470 grams respectively. There was no obstruction of the respiratory system. The heart weighed 380 grams. The coronary arteries showed some non-obstructive arteriosclerosis. The heart muscle revealed no scarring. All other organs revealed no pathology.

The brain, which weighed at time of autopsy 1460 grams, weighed 1520 grams after fixation. It showed no signs of intra vitam swelling. There was no arteriosclerosis. The only pathologic alteration within the brain consisted of a small round-shaped, probably granulomatous lesion containing cholesterol crystals. This was located in the dorsal portion of the left posterior thalamus. It measured 2 to 3 mm. in diameter and was surrounded by a brownish discolored zone. Ventrally from this zone, there was some grayish discoloration of the thalamic tissue.

The case was declared a homicide. All efforts of the police to solve the case have shown no result so far. One week after the body was found, a sweater belonging to the deceased was found along the roadside about one-half mile away from the home.

The microscopic slide submitted shows the thalamic lesion. What is the nature of the lesion? Does the lesion have any bearing on the fatal outcome of this case?