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Special Newsletter

For

Personal Injury

Attorneys

November 2024

This Month's Question:

What is the relationship between Mortality, Pre-existing Heart Disease and Trauma?

GO MD Review Answer:

We were asked to consult on a case of a man who died very shortly after being involved in an auto crash, which resulted in the man having several injuries, including broken ribs, leg fractures, and a partially amputated foot. It was the position of the insurance company the man died of a heart attack due to pre-existing coronary artery disease despite the fact the man died very shortly after the auto crash.

The client was airlifted to a local hospital and died of a heart attack in the emergency room. The county coroner did an autopsy and stated, "The autopsy findings in this case reveal that the cause of death is consistent with heart failure secondary to coronary insufficiency due to severe atherosclerotic coronary artery disease and other coronary abnormalities. The automobile accident is a possible contributory factor."

Our more likely explanation for this client's sudden death directly links it to his automobile accident. The body's response to the severe and acute stress of a car crash is to release catecholamines (i.e., stress hormones, the most common of these being adrenaline). The effect of a sudden adrenaline surge causes constriction of blood vessels, including the client's coronary arteries, which were already narrowed due to severe atherosclerosis. This sudden further constriction of these already compromised vessels results in temporary occlusion of blood flow through the coronary vasculature, causing acute heart failure, which, in this case, resulted in death.

In an article from the Institute of Forensic Medicine, University of Paris titled Stressful events as a trigger of sudden death: a study of 43 medico-legal autopsy cases Lecomte et al. state, "In conclusion, it appears from our autopsy study that SSD (stress-related sudden death) occurs primarily in those individuals with severe heart disease, especially coronary heart disease." This paper supports my opinion that the client's auto accident is his predominant cause of death.

Other articles in the medical literature also support this theory.

Saying this client died of heart failure due to coronary artery disease without attribution to the severe trauma of an automobile crash is akin to saying someone with lung disease died from poor oxygenation without mentioning they were drowned. Based on the circumstances of the auto accident, the client's multiple injuries, his pre-existing coronary artery disease as well as supporting evidence from the medical literature, our opinion was used to argue the predominant cause of death was the auto accident.

ALLOW ME TO OPTIMIZE YOUR CLAIM'S POTENTIAL

- * Assessment of Case Validity and Value**

- * Determination of Future Medical Care**

- * Assistance with Strategies to Promote Medical Theories & Causation**
- * Medical Summary Reports for Settlement Letters**
- * Medical Research and Delivery of Medical Journal Articles**
- * Answering Specific Medical Questions**
- * Interpretation of Meaning, or lack thereof, of Medical Reports & Records**
- * Standard of Care Reviews**
- * Deposition & Trial Question Preparation**
- * Facilitation of Communication with Clients, Families & Professionals**
- * IME Observation & IME Rebuttal Reports**

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Best regards,

Joe Schifilliti MD, MJ

P.S.---Please reply if you have a case to discuss!

P.P.S. ---If you found this newsletter helpful, please reply with: Yes

P.P.P.S ---If you are interested in learning more about the AstroPhotos accompanying this mailing, please visit [\\$ https://www.johnsastrophotos.com/](https://www.johnsastrophotos.com/)

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