



MWIA CASE STUDIES

VIOLENCE CAUSING DEATH

Case 5: So-called Accident

Objectives

- To show how detected but denied physical violence can lead to fatality
- To show how law enforcement and hospital staff can be better trained to pick up on these cases and have better (legal) tools to intervene on time.

Narrative Case

A divorced woman of approximately 39 years (Sonia) with a daughter from her marriage goes to live with her new boyfriend. She was a clerk in a hospital and regularly came to work with cuts and bruises. Clearly they were from physical abuse but she insisted that they were the product of accidents and slip-ups by her. In addition, she began to be pulled into the alcohol abuse perpetuated by her boyfriend. Possibly she did the latter to make the physical abuse less dreadful for her to undergo. In any case she never had the courage to get away from him. One day, upon not arriving at work, the police was dispatched to her home where she was found dead at the bottom of the stairs, the boyfriend saying she fell, being drunk and he didn't find her until he himself was woken by police, as he was sleeping off his drunken stupor. Due to a lack of evidence, prosecutors subsequently dismissed the case, although many believe it was at least manslaughter by the boyfriend.

Learning Points

1. Sometimes the obvious should lead to investigation, even if the party involved denies wrongdoing, or covers up wrong doing by their partner.
2. More specific training could be given to law-enforcement and/or hospital staff to detect abuse sooner and be able to intervene more quickly.