

Questions for Strangulation Expert
(Developed by Dr. George McClane, Dr. Dean Hawley, and Gael Strack, JD)

Qualifications of Expert:

1. Name
2. Title
3. Current Employer?
4. Current duties?
5. Years employed in your current position?
6. Prior work experience?
7. Education?
8. Medical training?
9. Strangulation Training?
10. Licenses?
11. Certificates?
12. Professional organizations?
13. Teaching experience?
14. Published writings?
15. Previously qualified as an expert witness?
16. How many times?
17. Testified for prosecution?
18. Testified for the defense?
19. Provided expert consultation in cases that did not result in trial?
20. Consult with prosecution?
21. Consult with defense?

22. Examine patients who have reported being strangled and survived?
23. How many have you examined as a treating physician?
24. Are you comfortable testifying today as an expert in the area of strangulation?

Questions for expert related to a non-fatal strangulation case:

1. Define choking:
2. Define strangulation:
3. What is the difference between choking and strangulation?
4. Describe the three methods of strangulation:
5. Define hypoxia?
6. What happens to the brain when there is a lack of oxygen after 10 seconds? 20?
30? 1 minute? 2 minutes? 3 minutes? 4 minutes?
7. What is hypoxic encephalopathy?
8. Define asphyxia:
9. What is the difference between hypoxia and asphyxia?
10. What happens to the brain when there is asphyxia or an interruption of
oxygenation?
11. Can the lack of oxygen to the brain result in either temporary or permanent brain
injury?
12. Other than unconsciousness, are there other signs of temporary hypoxia or
asphyxia?
13. What do you mean by behavioral changes?
14. How much external pressure and time does it take to cause unconsciousness?
15. What are some the variables?

16. What are the signs or symptoms of unconsciousness?
17. How long does it take a strangled victim to regain consciousness after unconsciousness?
18. What are the variables?
19. Please explain the “point of no return” that occurs after 50 seconds of continuous strangulation, with a complete disruption of oxygen supply to the brain:
20. How much external pressure must be applied before death occurs?
21. What are some of the variables?
22. Aside from unconsciousness, or behavioral disorders, are there other signs and symptoms of having been strangled?
23. Would a chart or charts help you explain those signs and symptoms?
24. Did you bring any charts with you today or may I direct to you to:
25. Please describe the external signs of attempted strangulation?
26. Where would you find visible findings such as redness, scratch marks, impression marks, or claw marks?
27. Describe how Petechiae are formed.
28. Where can Petechiae be seen on victims after strangulation has occurred?
29. What do Petechiae look like?
30. How long do they last?
31. Are there other causes for Petechiae other than strangulation?
32. What are some of those causes?
33. How are these Petechiae different from the ones seen in strangulation?

34. Why could there be swelling to the neck from strangulation?
35. Are there other internal injuries associated with strangulation or hypoxia?
36. Why would cause the tongue swell?
37. What are some of the symptoms of attempted strangulation?
38. Why would strangulation cause voice changes?
39. Why would strangulation cause swallowing changes?
40. Why would a victim who's been strangled vomit or feel like vomiting?
41. Why would a victim who's been strangled urinate or defecate?
42. What if a victim didn't urinate or defecate, but felt like s/he was going to?
43. Can the signs of a victim who survives strangulation be similar to the signs on a victim who has died as a result of strangulation?
44. Is there a way to tell how close a strangulation victim has come to death?
45. Are all strangulation cases serious?
46. What information and/or documents did you review in this case prior to testifying?
47. From your review, what were the signs and symptoms the victim exhibited?
48. In your opinion, are those signs and symptoms consistent with someone who has been strangled?
49. Is it your opinion that the application of force to the victim's neck for * seconds could cause internal injury?
50. Is it your opinion that the victim suffered internal injury? Serious injury?
Potentially great bodily injury?

Below are questions for you may consider asking in a homicide by strangulation case (courtesy of San Diego County Deputy District Attorney Dan Goldstein):

1. Are you a medical examiner?

2. How long have you been a medical examiner?
3. What specific training goes into becoming a medical examiner?
4. What are your duties?
5. What is an autopsy?
6. How many autopsies have you conducted in your career?
7. Have you testified in court?
8. What is a witnessing pathologist?
9. Were you the witnessing pathologist on *** during an autopsy of the victim?
10. Who was the pathologist?
11. Did you review the pathologist's report?
12. Please describe the external trauma of the victim that you saw.
13. Ask the witness to describe photos and injuries.
14. Ask the witness to describe any injuries to the eyes, face, and mouth.
15. Ask the witness to describe internal injuries.
16. What was the cause of death?
17. What are the reasons you believe the victim died from strangulation?