Neurosurgical Forum
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medicolegal aspects of craniocentric dog attacks

TO THE EDITOR: The recent paper by Kumar et al.² provided an excellent overview of craniocentric dog attacks requiring neurosurgical intervention (Kumar R, Deleyiannis FWB, Wilkinson C, et al: Neurosurgical sequelae of domestic dog attacks in children. *J Neurosurg Pediatr* 19:24–31, January 2017). It is well recognized that dogs will focus attacks on the face, head, and neck, particularly in children, often with devastating consequences.^{1,3} An additional aspect that is sometimes not considered in the initial clinical management of trauma cases (often for obvious reasons) is the potential medicolegal ramifications of such events. As the authors correctly point out, the majority of dog attacks occur in the home, initiated by a pet or a dog that is known to the family.^{1,2} In this situation identification of the attacking animal is not an issue, but in the case of an attack by an unknown dog, this may be of paramount importance if further attacks are to be prevented and charges are to be laid. If possible then, it may be extremely useful for those involved in identifying the dog to have photographs of the external and internal injuries prior to any surgical intervention, and for any trace evidence such as dog hair to have been signed and sealed and kept as evidence, with an appropriate chain of custody. Similar packaging of the victim's clothing in paper bags that have also been signed and sealed by one of the managing clinicians may also provide very useful material for forensic investigators. Of course, none of this

should in any way impede the urgent medical assessment and care of the victim; however, if possible, these additional actions should be considered as they may greatly facilitate subsequent medicolegal investigations and actions.

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Disclosures

The author reports no conflict of interest.

Response

No response was received from the authors of the original article.

INCLUDE WHEN CITING

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