Pattern and Impression Evidence on the Human Body - Case Reports

Suzanne Neffsinger
Patterns and Impressions are observed in evidence on a wide variety of substrates. One of the most challenging substrates on which to examine these types of evidence is the human body. Human skin tissue is pliable and conforms to an object upon direct contact. It is subject to pre- and post-mortem bruising, swelling, and blood pooling. It immediately begins the healing process in a survivor and can decompose rapidly in a deceased victim.

There are many factors to consider when examining questioned pattern and impression evidence on human beings. Blood migration often causes distortion of an impression in an injury that has begun to heal. Changes in the body’s position at the time of or after a forceful contact can result in the questioned pattern or impression misaligning when compared to the standard. Overlapping impressions can also be a complicating factor in impression comparisons.

Evidence in a variety of cases involving pattern and impression evidence on both skin and bone is presented.
**Crime:** Homicide

**Evidence:** The victim's skull cap with multiple injuries and impressions; variated tools

**Synopsis:** The victim was tortured and murdered in what is believed to be a drug-related crime.

**Results:**
- Compression of one impression on the skull cap with the hammer in size and shape and was different with different details in site.

**Status:** Unsealed