EDITORIAL

Newer Techniques For Autopsy

The quest of men to explore newer and better techniques is never ending. Performing autopsies by dissecting the body cavities is an age-old process and is claimed as 'gold standard' by many. However, some argue against it. The major objections to the conventional autopsy are:

a) Inhuman and unhygienic process;

b) Disfigurement and mutilation;

c) Cultural and religious reservations; and

d) Absence of objectivity.

In order to overcome these drawbacks, newer techniques have been tried and advocated. They are based on endoscopic and radiological examination[1,2]. Radiology was used in postmortem examination more than a century ago for the first time and ever since radiological investigations are frequently employed in autopsies[3]. However CT and MRI were utilized in postmortem examination only during last decade[4-5]. These techniques have the potential to overcome the objections associated with conventional autopsy. But, the question is that, can these techniques be used as an alternative to dissection method. There is hardly any doubt that these newer methods of postmortem evaluation are superior to conventional method in revealing certain cases of cranial, skeletal or tissue trauma as claimed by Thali. The newer techniques are also better in the sense that they can document even the finer details and preserved them for indefinite period for latter use in the court of law.

The major reservation against application of the newer techniques is the cost factor. This issue attains even more importance in developing countries like ours where resources are limited. Nevertheless, virtopsy (virtual autopsy) could be an alternative to conventional autopsy at least in few-selected cases[6].

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Editor

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