

Presidential Address by Dr Sally M Wood.

Doctor or Detective?

10<sup>th</sup> October 2006

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Dr Wood began by stating that she had worked as a "police surgeon" for 13 years. However "Police Surgeon" was an inappropriate title and those doctors who undertook forensic work now liked to be called Forensic Medical Examiners or Forensic Physicians.

The qualifications appropriate to forensic work were explained, in particular the Diploma in Medical Jurisprudence and Membership of the newly formed Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine in the Royal College of Medicine.

A series of pictures was shown where she explained how she identified whether or not a death was suspicious by the presence or absence of defence wounds along with "other injuries".

A brief outline was given of "custody medicine"; looking after the detainees' medical needs, assessing their level of intoxication, their mental state and defining whether or not they were fit for interview and detention.

Pictures were shown of injuries and how they could be matched to certain weapons, how they could corroborate a story (or not!) and of some "legal injuries", in particular the lesion produced when an armed man was shot with a "rubber bullet".

Some data was given regarding rape. In particular the conviction rate in South Wales was 12.18%. This is the third highest in England and Wales where the rate overall is 5.2%. She commented that this had been at a time when well trained FMEs were doing the sexual assault examinations and wondered whether these statistics would change with the newly "outsourced" forensic medical service. Reasons were given as to why so many women withdraw their allegations of rape.

Date rape was much rarer than the media would have us believe. Most girls were under the influence of a lot of alcohol which they may have drunk knowingly. Alcohol, Gabahydroxybutyrate and any benzodiazepine could be used as stupefying drugs and all gave anterograde amnesia. A paper from the Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine published in 2001 was quoted stating that only 2 out of more than 3,000 urines tested of girls claiming to have been "date raped" were positive for benzodiazepines. Rohypnol had not been found since the year 2000.

Dr Wood outlined the examination of a complainant of rape and what samples needed to be collected and concluded with some pictures of injuries that provided corroborative evidence of their stories.