

Strangulation Injuries in the Domestic Violence Patient: Why EMS Plays a Critical Role

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Dan Batsie is the Chief of Emergency Medical Services for the Vermont Department of Health. He has been a paramedic in New York, Maine and now Vermont for more than 28 years. Prior to working in Vermont, he was a regional education coordinator for the State of Maine and administered the paramedic programs for Eastern Maine and Kennebec Valley Community Colleges. He has authored two EMS textbooks and is currently working on his third.

Domestic violence patients face a variety challenges that frequently involve EMS. From critical medical interventions to access to social services, EMS practitioners provide a vital service. With strangulation injuries however, the EMS response is even more important. Beyond the obvious threats to airway and breathing, identification of these injuries can provide hugely important insight into the ongoing safety of the patient. A victim of domestic violence who is strangled by their intimate partner is 800 times more likely to be killed. Are you prepared to recognize this warning sign? This interactive session will discuss the recognition features and the specific treatment strategies associated with strangulation injuries. We will further describe the vital role of EMS plays in both social service referral and in forensic documentation leading to successful prosecution. The intent is to provide practitioners tangible resources that will improve the overall care for these patients and enhance their contribution to the ongoing challenge of ending the vicious cycle of domestic violence.

Presentation Outline:

- I. Differentiating strangulation
- II. The significance of strangulation.
- III. How the EMS primary assessment sets us up for failure.
- IV. The symptoms of strangulation.
- V. The signs of strangulation.
- VI. Best practice strangulation care and advocacy.
- VII. Conclusions.

Objective 1: Differentiate strangulation from choking.

Objective 2: Describe the medical and domestic violence significance of a strangulation injury.

Objective 3: List 10 indications of a domestic violence related strangulation injury.