

SA protocols for investigating sudden deaths in-custody associated with excited delirium and positional asphyxia

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Annually a small number of individuals suddenly die after a physical force altercation with police, correctional, or mental health personnel. The person exhibits bizarre, violent, and combative behaviors frequently related to chemical impairment, symptoms of mental impairment or both. A central problem in these deaths is identifying the exact cause of death. As a result numerous questions emerge which will be directed at the restraining officers, their department, and medico-legal investigators. Because these incidents will generate civil and/or criminal charges against the restraining personnel, this presentation identifies protocols for conducting sudden in-custody deaths investigations. The presentation identifies the detailed protocols necessary in performing an unexpected death in custody which occurs after the use of various less-lethal techniques, devices, and restraints. Current research on the physiological, pharmacological, and psychological causes of these deaths and the utilization of less lethal force techniques and weaponry is addressed, which form the basis for the investigatory protocols.

Biography

Darrell L. Ross, Ph.D. received his doctorate from Michigan State University in 1992. He has researched sudden deaths in custody for 25 years and he and Ted Chan, MD published the first text which addressed the varying components associated with these deaths. He and Chan developed a three-day instructor course and an 8-hour course for police officers based on their research and their book. The course received national recognition by the Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA). He has published four books and over 80 journal articles. He routinely presents training, seminars on conducting investigations of sudden deaths associated with excited delirium and positional asphyxia. He has provided expert witness testimony in over 700 civil and criminal cases. He has been a consultant to the NIJ working group on Excited Delirium, numerous police and detention departments, Attorney's General offices in five states, police training academies, and death investigators across the United States.

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