

forward to seeing an expanded publication on the use of digital radiography to identify victims of the 1996 TWA Flight 800 disaster by Drs. Firestone and Friedman and congratulate them on their work in this regard.

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Commentary on Swalwell CI, Davis GG. Methamphetamine as a risk factor for acute aortic dissection. *J Forensic Sci* 1999;44(1):23-6.

Sir:

I read with great interest the very informative article written by Drs. Swalwell and Davis cited above. I would like some additional information on the study patients. Is it possible for the authors to state the exact age of all persons positive for methamphetamine who were 21 years of age or younger, if any, in this study. Also, a table or listing of the age and etiologic factor of the acute aortic dissection, if any, for each of the study patients would provide additional important information. It would also be interesting to know if the 13-year-old person with acute aortic dissection was positive for methamphetamine.

This information would be important to practitioners responsible for the health care of children, teens and young adults, particularly those involved in the acute care setting. I thank you for your efforts.

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Authors' Response

Sir:

We wish to thank Dr. Fikar for his interest in our recent article (1). Since we were interested in both the short and long term effects of drugs, we confined our study to adults (18 and older), which is why the 13 year old was not included. The ages of the methamphetamine cases were 28, 39, 42, 43 (three cases) and 52 years of age. Of these cases, four of them had a known history of hypertension. The only other risk factor in this group is that one of the cases had a bicuspid aortic valve. The 13 year old was excluded solely based on his age. He had no known or identifiable risk factors for his dissection, which by the time of his death had ruptured into both chest cavities. He had developed the symptoms of back pain and vomiting while at an amusement park and was taken to the hospital a short time later. It is interesting to note that he had an episode of back pain one week prior to his death. As far as we can ascertain, he never had any toxicologic studies done. He was not known to use drugs.

Reference

1. Swalwell CI, Davis GG. Methamphetamine as a risk factor for acute aortic dissection. *J Forensic Sci* 1999;44(1):23-6.

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