

Medico-Legal Significance of ‘Self-Embedding of Foreign Bodies’

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ABSTRACT

Self-embedding is a form of self-injury where foreign objects are inserted underneath the skin. Though it is reported in scientific literature, it is not being reported in forensic literature.

In the year 2010, a housemaid returned from Saudi Arabia with 24 nails and needles in her body. After arrival, she had not informed that she had been tortured by the employer.

In the year 2013, another Sri Lankan housemaid from Middle East admitted to hospital with needles in her body alleged that needles being inserted by her master. X-rays showed 4 needles in her face and limbs, placed parallel to the skin surface. She would have self-embedded these needles in a way to escape from employer.

There are cases of self-inflicted injuries in people with Munchausen syndrome, where people simulate trauma or illness in order to draw attention.

In conclusion, ‘the medico-legal significance of self-embedding of foreign objects’ is a new concept where the forensic physician has to exclude ‘torture’ by a third party before ascertaining the concept of self-harm. Multiple foreign objects, found parallel to body surface, at accessible sites and accessible directions to push foreign bodies between the thumb and index finger favors self-embedding.

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► *Implication for health policy/practice/research/medical education:* Medico-Legal Significance of ‘Self-Embedding of Foreign Bodies’

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