

APPENDIX K | PHOTO DOCUMENTATION AND FORENSIC EVIDENCE COLLECTION

PHOTO-DOCUMENTATION

Equipment Needed:

- Camera: 35 mm, digital (with security software), instant
- Macro lens (focal length 100-105 mm) and/or colposcope
- Ring Flash (to avoid “white-outs”)
- Color Bar
- Ruler
- Blue sheet for background behind extremity images
- Modesty drape for patient

Procedure:

- Explain the importance of photographic documentation and obtain consent to obtain photographs
- Use a color bar in the first picture of each roll of 35 mm film or on one image of digital or instant films
- The first 3 images should be a) a full body image of the clothed patient, b) a close-up facial view and c) a close-up view of patient’s identification card or plate
- Remove all clothing and use an examination gown or other drapes appropriately
- Each injury should have a medium distance body part image and then at least 2 close-ups with one at a 90 degree angle and one tangential to the injury and one that tries to duplicate patient and perpetrator positions
- Use color film and a measuring standard (such as a ruler) to assess the size of each individual injury, ideally taking one image with the standard and one without so as to avoid suspicion so something was hidden behind the standard
- Use security measures and software to assure that the photographs can not be altered
- When photographing bite marks, use the American Board of Forensic Odontology (ABFO) #2 standard
- Offer the patient a visit for follow-up photographs at a later visit (2-4 days) to document the duration and progression of injuries
- Obtain photographs of areas of permanent residual injury (as permanent injuries can increase penalties if a case is prosecuted)
- Use a colposcope if available for documenting small findings or injuries to mouth or ear canals
- If using instant images, take one set of pictures for the record and one set of pictures for the patient
- Include a label on each hard copy photograph that includes the date, patient’s name, record number and photographer’s name
- Adhere to the highest standards for privacy and confidentiality regarding developing, storage, retrieval and review of photos

Evidence Collection:

- Collect, describe or photograph: torn, stained or bloody clothing according to local protocols. Clothing should be dried and sealed in paper bags only
- Collect corroborating evidentiary materials such as fingernail scrapings, hair, fiber, soil, debris or other foreign materials
- Swab areas suspicious for blood, saliva or semen. Collect a reference sample of blood from victim if blood swabs are collected
- Swab bite marks with saline soaked cotton swabs for saliva analysis
- Use a sexual assault evidence collection protocols (rape kit) if sexual assault occurred
- Consider further imaging or laryngoscopy evaluation when strangulation is involved
- Consider voice recording in strangulation cases where patient reports a voice change
- Collect, store and transfer evidence with strict adherence to “chain of evidence” protocols
- Determine evidence collection procedures with local crime lab professionals
- Document any other laboratory results, diagnostic imaging studies or consultations

