

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**

3025 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-3025  
Telephone 919-743-9000  
Fax 919-743-9099



**REPORT OF AUTOPSY EXAMINATION**

**DECEDENT**

**Document Identifier** B202000726  
**Autopsy Type** ME Autopsy  
**Name** Courtney Deborah Heater  
**Age** 24 yrs  
**Race** White  
**Sex** F

**AUTHORIZATION**

**Authorized By** Feris L. Ammons RN **Received From** Columbus

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Date of Exam** 02/03/2020 **Time of Exam** 10:00  
**Autopsy Facility** Office of the Chief Medical Examiner **Persons Present** Ms. Katelyn Barnes

**CERTIFICATION**

**Cause of Death**

FENTANYL AND HEROIN INTOXICATION

**The facts stated herein are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.**

**Digitally signed by**

Susan E. Venuti MD 06 August 2020 12:59

**DIAGNOSES**

Fentanyl and heroin intoxication  
Pulmonary edema and congestion  
Mild patchy bronchopneumonia  
Minor blunt force injuries of head, torso and extremities  
No associated craniocerebral or thoracoabdominal injuries

**IDENTIFICATION**

**Body Identified By**

Papers/ID Tag

**EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION**

**Length** 70 inches  
**Weight** 194 pounds  
**Body Condition** Intact  
**Rigor** Rigor mortis is firmly developed in the extremities, neck and jaw.  
**Livor** Livor mortis is pink-red, posterior and fixed. Lividity involves the midline to left side of the face.  
**Hair** The scalp hair is long and brown, measuring up to approximately 15".  
**Eyes** The irides are blue. The conjunctivae and sclerae are injected.  
**Teeth** The teeth are natural.

The body is received supine in a body bag with the zipper pulls secured through the plastic bag with a blue seal #0005542 and an attached identification tag. Secured to the right great toe is an identification tag.

**CLOTHING AND PERSONAL EFFECTS:** The body is received clad in a black T-shirt and covered over the thighs with a multicolored towel. Within the right earlobe is white metal ring with a large clear stone.

**EVIDENCE OF MEDICAL/SURGICAL INTERVENTION:** On the right paramidline upper chest and left lateral chest

are defibrillator/pacing pads.

IDENTIFYING MARKS, SCARS AND TATTOOS: Behind the left ear over the neck is a professional, monochromatic tattoo of "kia kaha". On the left medial upper arm is a professional, monochromatic tattoo of "With arms wide open". On the right anterior lower leg is a professional, monochromatic tattoo of a sunflower. On the right dorsal foot proximal to the great toe is a professional, monochromatic tattoo with an arrow. On the right lateral leg extending from the knee and lower leg is a professional, polychromatic tattoo of a woman with flowers as the head. On the right anterior upper arm is a professional, polychromatic tattoo of an insect. On the right lateral torso is a professional, monochromatic tattoo of a feather. On the back of the right leg is a professional, polychromatic tattoo of a motorcycle with MB18. A piercing involves the umbilicus. On the right lateral elbow area is a 1" healed scar.

The body is that of a well-developed, well-nourished white female appearing consistent with the reported age of 24 years. The head is normocephalic. Minor injuries involve the midline to left side of the upper head and face. The ears are normally formed with earlobe piercings X2 each. The periorbital skin has pale gray-yellow-orange discoloration. The conjunctivae and sclerae are without petechiae. No oral mucosal petechiae are present. The breasts are symmetrical. The abdomen is soft and abdominal striae are noted. The upper extremities are symmetrical. Multiple contusions are present on the upper and lower extremities. The fingernails appear trimmed and clean with up to 2 mm overhangs. The lower extremities are symmetrical. The toenails appear slightly irregular in length with flaking black polish. The external genitalia are those of an adult female and are atraumatic. The pubic hair has previously been shaven. The back and buttocks are unremarkable. There is no blood or stool present at the anus.

## **INJURIES**

### **Blunt Force Trauma of Head:**

Over the right upper forehead near the hairline are discontinuous red abrasions, measuring 1 x 3/4" in aggregate. On the left forehead above the medial eyebrow is a discontinuous red abrasion, measuring 1 x 5/8". Edema involves the left lateral supraorbital area and left lateral eyebrow. At the left upper forehead near the hairline is discontinuous, faint pink abrasion with focal contusion, measuring 1 x 5/16". Some small petechial spotting is noted at the inferior left eye. Punctate abrasions are also noted on the right lateral nose and the left naris. Lateral to the right eyebrow is a red-purple contusion, measuring 1/4 x 1/4". Few small spotted contusions/hemorrhages are noted on the midline to left sided deep scalp, periosteum and temporalis muscle, with overlapping congestion. No craniocerebral injuries are present.

### **Blunt Force Trauma of Chest, Abdomen and Pelvis:**

Small abrasions are noted on the breasts surrounding the areola, greater on the left. Below the left areola are a small 1/8 x 1/8" contusion and a 3/8" linear pale pink abrasion. On the left lateral inferior breast is a discontinuous curvilinear thin pale pink abrasion. On the right medial breast are two small pink contusions, measuring 3/4 x 1/4". On the left lateral torso is an area of pale pink abrasion with contusion, measuring in aggregate 5 x 4 1/2". Small pink contusions are noted at the right anterior pelvis extending to the pubic area, measuring in aggregate 2 1/2 x 2 1/2". No internal thoracoabdominal injuries are present.

### **Blunt Force Trauma of Extremities:**

On the right dorsal hand are three pink contusions, measuring in aggregate 1 1/4 x 1". On the right proximal dorsal third finger is a small purple contusion, measuring 1/8 x 1/8". Extending along the right posterior forearm are multiple round dusky pink contusions, the largest measuring up to 1/2 x 3/8". At the right elbow are contusions with superimposed red abrasions, the largest measuring 1/2 x 1/2". On the right anterior lateral forearm is a dusky pink contusion, measuring 3/4 x 1/2". On the right medial upper arm are pink contusions, with the largest measuring 1 1/8 x 3/4".

On the left superior shoulder are two small puncture marks, each measuring 1/16 x 1/16". On the left medial upper arm near the tattoo are discontinuous light blue-gray and pink contusions, covering an area in aggregate measuring 3 1/2 x 1 1/2". On the left inferior medial upper arm towards the elbow is a gray-pink-pale blue contusion with associated small cut, measuring 1 1/2 x 1". On the left forearm extending onto the elbow are multiple large and discontinuous dusky pink contusions, the largest measuring up to 3 x 2". On the left dorsal hand proximal to the second and third fingers is a faint gray-pink-yellow contusion, measuring 1/8 x 1/4".

On the right medial thigh is a dusky pink-gray contusion, measuring 2 1/2 x 5/8". Extending along the right leg from knee to lower leg are multiple discontinuous dusky pink contusions, the largest is composed of multiple coalescing contusions measuring in aggregate 3 1/4 x 3". On the right lateral malleolus are discontinuous pink contusions, measuring 1 1/2 x 1". On the right dorsal foot are two gray-pink contusions, proximally measuring 3/4 x 1", and distally more gray-pink measuring 1/2 x 1/2". On the left dorsal foot is a purple-blue contusion, measuring 1/4 x 1/4". On the left medial foot proximal to the great toe is a pink contusion, measuring 3/8 x 3/8". On the right medial malleolus is a 1/4 x 1/4", pink contusion. Multiple pink contusions with slight yellow discoloration extend from the left knee onto the lower leg, covering an area in aggregate measuring 8 1/2 x 3 3/4". On the left anterior-medial thigh is an ovoid abrasion, measuring 3/8 x 3/8".

## **DISPOSITION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS AND EVIDENCE**

### **The following items are released with the body**

The clothing is released with the body.

### **The following items are preserved as evidence**

None.

## **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

### **Body Cavities**

The body cavities are examined by the customary Y-shaped incision. No blood or excess fluid is present in the peritoneal cavity. The right and left pleural cavities contain less than 10 mL of clear serous fluid. No pleural or peritoneal adhesions are present. The diaphragm is intact. The abdominal panniculus measures up to 1 1/4" in thickness.

### **Cardiovascular System**

**Heart Weight** 360 grams

The heart is normal in shape. The epicardial surface is smooth and glistening. The coronary arteries have their usual origin and distribution with patent lumina. The myocardium is red-brown without pallor, hemorrhage or scarring. The posterior left and right ventricular walls measure 1.2 cm and 0.3 cm in thickness, respectively. The cardiac valves are normally formed, thin and flexible. The aorta is of normal caliber with atheromatous streaks.

### **Respiratory System**

**Right Lung Weight** 850 grams

**Left Lung Weight** 710 grams

The lungs have the usual lobation. The pleural surfaces are smooth and glistening. Cut sections reveal marked pulmonary edema. The airway contains a scant amount of aspirated gastric contents. The pulmonary arteries are free of emboli.

### **Gastrointestinal System**

The esophagus is lined by smooth, gray-white mucosa without ulceration or varices. The stomach contains 150 mL of brown liquid with tan food particles. The gastric mucosa is smooth and tan without rugae. The small and large bowel loops are unremarkable. The distal large bowel contains brown stool. The appendix is present and unremarkable.

### **Liver**

**Liver Weight** 1520 grams

The hepatic capsular surface is smooth and red-brown. The cut sections reveal no gross lesions. The gallbladder contains green bile without calculi.

### **Spleen**

**Spleen Weight** 150 grams

The splenic capsule is intact. The parenchyma is red-purple and firm.

### **Pancreas**

The pancreas is pink-tan and lobulated without gross lesions.

### **Urinary**

**Right Kidney Weight** 110 grams

**Left Kidney Weight** 130 grams

The renal cortical surfaces are smooth and red-brown. Cut sections reveal well-demarcated corticomedullary junctions. The urinary bladder contains no urine.



### **Reproductive**

The uterus has a pink-tan myometrium without gross lesions. The ovaries and Fallopian tubes are symmetrical. The ovaries are firm.

### **Endocrine**

The thyroid gland is symmetrical and purple-brown without gross lesions. The adrenal glands have yellow-orange cortices and gray-tan medullae.

### **Neurologic**

**Brain Weight** 1370 grams

Spotted contusions involve the deep scalp as previously described. The calvarium and basilar skull are intact and free of fractures. There is no subdural or subarachnoid hemorrhage. The brain is symmetrical. The leptomeninges are thin and transparent. The circle of Willis is normally distributed and free of atherosclerosis. Cut sections of the cerebrum, cerebellum and brainstem reveal no focal lesions.

### **Musculoskeletal System**

Fractures involve the right anterior rib #7 and left anterior rib #6 without associated hemorrhage. No additional ribs are fractured. The pelvis, spine and extremities are intact and free of fractures. The tongue is free of intramuscular hemorrhage. The strap and paraspinal muscles of the anterior neck are free of hemorrhage. The hyoid bone, thyroid cartilage and cricoid cartilage are intact and atraumatic.

## **MICROSCOPIC EXAMINATION**

### **Microscopic Comment**

Representative tissue sections of heart, lung, liver and kidney are submitted for microscopic examination. Except as described below, the remaining microscopic sections are unremarkable.

### **Cardiovascular**

Mild peribronchiolar acute inflammation is present with mild patchy intra-alveolar acute pneumonia.

## **SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION**

Courtney Deborah Heater, a 24-year-old woman, had reportedly been vomiting and fell, striking her head. She was observed to turn blue and stop breathing. Emergency rescue personnel were summoned and she was transported to the local hospital where death was pronounced following unsuccessful resuscitative attempts. The autopsy was significant for marked pulmonary edema and early patchy mild bronchopneumonia seen microscopically. Minor blunt force injuries of the of the head, torso and extremities were non-contributory to the cause of death. Toxicological analysis of postmortem blood revealed fentanyl and morphine with 6-monoacetylmorphine and codeine consistent with heroin use. Caffeine, citalopram and diphenhydramine were also detected. It is opined that she died from fentanyl and heroin intoxication.

## **DIAGRAMS**

There are no diagrams for this Autopsy.