The role of forensic anthropology in Disaster Victim Identification (DVI).

Abstract

This paper briefly describes Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) and reviews the history of the use of forensic anthropology in the identification process. The potential contributions made by forensic anthropology are illustrated through the presentation of a case study. In February 2009 the state of Victoria in south-eastern Australia experienced the most devastating bushfires in its history, resulting in catastrophic loss of life and public and private property. Within 48 h of the disaster, forensic teams including pathologists, odontologists and anthropologists assembled at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine in Melbourne to begin the task of identifying the deceased. This paper reviews the part played by forensic anthropologists in the identification process and outlines the important contribution anthropologists can make to DVI, especially at the scene, in the mortuary and in the reconciliation process. The anthropologist's experience with differentially preserved human remains meant they
played an important role identifying and recovering heavily fragmentary human skeletal remains, differentiating human from non-human remains, establishing basic biological information such as the sex and age of the individuals and confirming or denying the possibility of re-associating body parts for release to families.

Keywords

Forensic anthropology; DVI; Disasters; Identification

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