Case #26

NAME Educational Activities Committee
Case and images courtesy of Dr. Cori Clark (PGY3) and Dr. Daniel Dye (FP Fellowship Program Director, University of Alabama at Birmingham)
The decedent is a 21-year-old man who was transported to a local hospital after being injured in an altercation. He arrived by private vehicle and was immediately taken to surgery by the Trauma Team. Despite medical intervention, he died in the operating theater. During the postmortem examination, an injury was identified in the decedent's axilla.

What caused the injury depicted in the photographs?
Correct answer:

The decedent sustained a single gunshot wound of the torso. The entrance wound can be seen in Image 1 just below the thoracotomy incision on the left side of the chest. In the axilla is a cut from scissors. The cut was made by the Trauma Team when they cut the decedent's clothing from his body. We occasionally see these iatrogenic injuries in the axillary regions and on the lateral aspects of the torso on the skin above the iliac crests.
Gun shot wound spreader Surgical retractor caused wound incision iatrogenic injury Post-mortem exit Ice pick GSW entrance wound Surgical surgical clip medical intervention chest Gunshot wound device thoracotomy clamp injury post mortem Rib spreader skin slippage retractor stab wound artifact due gunshot medical postmortem used skin Therapeutic intervention iatrogenic Shored exit Rib Artefact chest spreader Electrocuton Bullet knife rib-spreader Stab used thoracotomy
Answer Distribution

- Iatrogenic injury: 55.7%
- Gunshot wound: 16.8%
- Sharp Force: 6.4%
- Other: 6.4%
- Postmortem/Decomp: 6.1%
- Other Penetrating trauma: 3.2%
- Burn: 3.2%
- Natural disease: 1.1%
- Ice pick: 1.1%
Example of a retractor (rib spreader) injury.
Reference: