

Harold shipman (aka dr. death)

Law



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Harold Shipman Case Study Although the science of criminal investigation has developed immensely from the time that fingerprints were used to identify possible suspects at a crime scene, it has not really grown past the stage where master criminal minds can figure out ways and means to effectively cover up their tracks for decades or even permanently. One of the most well known criminal minds that managed to cover his murderous tracks for nearly 2 decades, 18 years to be exact, was Dr. Harold Shipman. Due to his background in the medical sciences, he was effectively able to kill more than 200 women and declare their deaths unquestionable due to his position in the medical community. Indeed it is a sad day when the person who took the Hippocratic Oath to save lives becomes the madman who instead takes the lives of his trusting patients for no apparent reason. The history of the man known as Harold Shipman is one that carries a high degree of respect for the integrity of the person. However, after his eventual imprisonment, it was discovered that he had been on a murderous rampage for far longer than originally expected. He had been killing mostly women ever since he first became a general practitioner. It is believed that (Hurwitz, B, 2008): “ Whilst working as a junior hospital doctor, he killed approximately fifteen patients and as a GP he killed over 230; an atrocity carried out very largely in the privacy of people’s own homes.” The possibility that Dr. Shipman had been murdering his female patients was first raised by Dr. Linda Reynolds of the Brooke Surgery located in Hyde. If studied intently, his actions came under scrutiny mainly because he did his best to cover up his tracks after every murder by signing off on the death certificate and advising that the bodies be cremated. The high rate of death certificates that he counter signed raised a red flag with those working at the Frank Massey and Son's <https://assignbuster.com/harold-shipman-aka-dr-death/>

funeral parlor who then voiced their concern to Dr. Reynolds. It was she who approached coroner John Pollard with the theory that Dr. Shipman might have been responsible for more than just his patient's medical care (“Forensic Science Central”, 2013) based upon the fact all the deaths seemed to occur in his presence either from a heart attack or stroke while he left the body to be discovered by next of kin (Hurwitz, B, 2008). It was this concern that brought about a police investigation upon the man in March 1998 that a formal inquiry was made into the death of his more than 240 patients. Sadly, no evidence could be presented to help support the murder theory in Dr. Shipman's case so all charges were dropped and the inquiry ended. But just like all other criminals, there came a time when the doctor perhaps got too overconfident and cocky. He finally left trace evidence that the police and justice system used quite effectively against him (Hurwitz, B, 2008). His murderous rampage came to an abrupt end when he murdered the former lady mayor of Hyde named Kathleen Grundy in March 1998. When she died and left a will that cut out her direct next of kin, specifically her lawyer daughter Angela Woodruff, in favor of Dr. Shipman, the daughter of Grundy decided to file a formal complaint with the police. This time the investigating team finally caught a break in the case. The body of Kathleen Grundy was never cremated and was exhumed for further forensic study (England, G. , 2010). Forensic investigation on Mrs. Grundy's body showed the reason as to why no physical evidence of the crime could ever be found by the police for a very long time. Dr. Shipman used his knowledge of drugs to administer lethal doses of heroin to his elderly patients. The subsequent cremation of the bodies prevented the police from discovering any traces of evidence on the patient herself. The murder weapon, a simple injection syringe would

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come into the house of the target and then leave again with the murderer, being thrown away after the deed was done (Hurwitz, B, 2008). Dame Janet Smith, the head of the Shipman Inquiry declared another reason for the reason that no charges were brought forth earlier against Dr. Shipman. She declared at a lecture at the Royal College of General Practitioners that (as cited in Hurwitz, 2008): "... Patients and their relatives were unwilling to challenge what they were told by doctors because they lacked the confidence to do so and because, historically, patients placed unquestioning trust in their doctors. The culture within the profession itself was one of professional solidarity based on an unquestioning assumption that all medical colleagues are well-intentioned and competent. There has also been a culture of complete respect for a colleague's clinical judgment and freedom to the extent that doctors have been reluctant to criticise a colleague even though his or her actions had clearly damaged a patient. [T]he case of Renate Overton, examined by the Inquiry, showed how reluctant two consultants were, as recently as 1994, to report their concern about Shipman even though they both believed that he had administered an excessive dose of morphine to Mrs Overton, an asthmatic patient and, as a result, had caused her to suffer catastrophic brain damage." In the end, the case of Dr. Death as Shipman later became known as brought forth an era of change in the regulations governing the ethical practice and norms of medicine in England. However, Shipman did not live long enough to actually suffer the consequences of his 15 life sentences without the possibility of parole. He committed suicide by hanging himself in his prison cell in 2004. Sources England, G. (2010). Harold Fred Shipman: An account of the murderous gp of Hyde. geraldengland. co. uk. Retrieved from <http://www.https://assignbuster.com/harold-shipman-aka-dr-death/>

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