

The role of bone scintigraphy on diagnosis of torture

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Background: The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey was established in 1990 to serve torture survivors and since then has been providing rehabilitation and documentation for torture survivors. Bone scintigraphy can be one of the diagnostic methods to reveal trauma, particularly after several years when it is challenging to find any physical or radiological evidence.

The aim of the present study was to show the value of the bone scintigraphy as a diagnostic method for torture diagnosis based on the data of applicants of Human Rights Foundation of Turkey.

Methodology: 13477 torture survivors applied to Human Rights Foundation of Turkey's Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers between 1991 and 2012. Totally 415 patients who have bone scintigraphy were included in the study. Their gender, age, socioeconomic status, torture methods, the incidence of torture, duration of torture, time elapsed of torture and findings of bone scintigraphy were evaluated retrospectively.

Results: 65 (15.7%) of them were female and 350 (84.3%) were male, mean age was 0.98 ± 9.67 years (range 11-72 years). The torture methods varied from beating to falanga, electric shock, suspension, positional torture and several other types of torture within the period of practice, although beating was a common denominator among all. The findings were classified according to time since torture and duration of exposure to torture. 232 of them (56 %) had a detectable bone lesion on bone scintigraphy, and the detectable bone lesion on scintigraphy increased significantly with the duration of exposure to torture, particularly among patients who had been subjected to torture for a longer period (7 days and more).

Bone scintigraphy should be considered as a valuable non-invasive diagnostic method for torture allegations.

Keywords; Torture, Bone Scintigraphy, Documenting Torture, Diagnostic Methods, Istanbul Protocol.

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest