The Statistical Analysis on the Forensic Odontological Examination at the National Forensic Services from 2011 to 2015

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ABSTRACT

Forensic odontology is a branch of dentistry applying dental knowledge to criminal and civil laws for the purpose of maintaining public order and treating legal issues in association with dental evidence. The National Forensic Service (NFS) is a Korean government agency responsible for the examination and evaluation of evidences at crime scene. The Section of Forensic Odontology of the Medical Examiner's Office in NFS is performing forensic odontological analysis of human remains. This study statistically examined overall forensic odontological cases referred to the NFS from 2011 to 2015. After then the results were compared with the previous study (2011), which examined the cases from 2007 to 2010 in an attempt to figure out the trends of practical cases in forensic odontology and the future direction for the research.

A total of 588 forensic odontological cases were commissioned to the NFS between 2011 and 2015. The numbers of requests per year were similar to the past, and the highest in April and September of each year. In terms of regional origins, the proportion of total number of the requests (54.9%) was the highest in the metropolitan area. However, the proportions in other regions (Gyeongsang Provinces, Jeolla Province etc.) were being increased when compared to the previous study. In referral routes of the cases, the majority of the requests (77.0%) was occurred in intra-NFS (further dental examinations after the autopsies in the NFS) rather than direct requests from police agencies. This tendency appeared to result from the overall increasing autopsy numbers in South Korea. In terms of the areas of practice, postmortem biological profiling including age estimation occupied absolute majority proportion of the overall requests (94.0%), which were more increased from the past, while dental identification (3.4%) and bitemark analysis (0.9%) tended to decrease. The results from this study will be an important reference material for the study and training of the forensic odontology in the future.