3.3 Suffer Not the Children: Deaths in Custody at the Border

Roger A. Mitchell, Jr. MD
Chief Medical Examiner – Washington DC

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to

1. Describe the role of the Medical Examiner in investigating deaths in the custody of the US Customs and Board Patrol (CBP).
2. State the specific microorganisms which were responsible for the death of two children while in CBP custody.
3. Explain the role of an independent medical review of deaths in custody in a US Congressional Hearing.

Abstract

On December 6, 2018, Jakelin Caal-Maquin, a 7-year-old female child, and her father were apprehended by US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) seeking entrance into the United States from Guatemala. On December 18, 2018, Filipe Gomez-Alonso, an 8-year-old male child and his father were also apprehended by CBP seeking entrance into the US from Guatemala. Both children died while in the custody of CBP.

These deaths resulted in high profile media coverage. As a result of these deaths and others, the US Congress called for a complete review of these two children's deaths. A forensic pathologist and pediatrician were identified to perform an independent assessment of the medical record.

This presentation will review the findings of each case and the testimony given to the United States Congress Committee on Homeland Security.