Excited Delirium and Sudden Death
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Objectives:

1. Define the term “excited delirium”.
2. Differentiate between the proposed mechanisms of death associated with excited delirium.
3. Outline the recommended process for investigating excited delirium related deaths that occur in custody

Excited delirium is characterized by an acute onset of bizarre and violent behavior which can result from acute psychosis or use of stimulants, such as cocaine or methamphetamine. Episodes of excited delirium can lead to sudden death, especially when associated with a significant physical struggle. In the forensic community, these cases are usually controversial as the deaths often occur after a physical altercation with or while being restrained by law enforcement officers. These cases present a particular challenge, as there may be few physical findings discovered at autopsy.

This presentation will focus on excited delirium syndrome, its mechanisms of death, and its role in deaths in custody.