



**GODOY**

MEDICAL FORENSICS  
INCORPORATED

### Summary of Findings

In this case, the defendant was being charged with felony strangulation. I educated the court that scratch marks on the neck of strangulation victims are most often self-inflicted, and the pathophysiology behind low oxygen levels, or hypoxia. **In Strangulation cases, it is important to take note of any marks on the victim's neck, but the evidence of strangulation lies in the signs and symptoms of hypoxia.**

### Case Study: Strangulation...What does the evidence show?

*All names have been changed*

Mr. Smith, the defendant, was accused of strangling Ms. Thomas for a period of 15 seconds, during which time she was unable to breathe. Nine days after the incident, Ms. Thomas provided a written statement in which she stated that she began to lose her hearing and vision during the assault, and was dizzy and unbalanced afterwards.

#### Fingernail Scratches

Photos (shown below) indicate red linear marks to the back of her neck. In strangulation cases, **scratches to the neck are often self-inflicted from the victim trying to pull the assailant's hands off their neck.** Many strangulation victims show no sign of injury to their neck, so red marks or bruises cannot be used to definitively prove or disprove a strangulation allegation.



#### Hypoxia

**Her complaints of dizziness and vision/hearing changes are consistent with hypoxia and supported her allegations of strangulation.** The state asked questions about how hypoxia can result from strangulation, and the defense asked questions relating to other potential causes of hypoxia, including emotional responses and high intensity exercise.