

2016 Annual Scientific Meeting
FIT Open Mic Competition

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PRESENTATION INFORMATION

Title of Presentation: Lethal Injection in the United States

Abstract: This talk will examine a brief history of lethal injection as a means of capital punishment in the United States. The injection of pharmaceutical agents to cause death was originally brought up as a possible mode of execution in the US as far back as the 1880s, but wasn't embraced as a practice until the 1970s due to social and political forces. Despite the principles articulated in physician oaths, and the objections of medical professional associations, physicians have been involved in the development of pharmaceutical protocols and, in some cases, even the administration of lethal injection. A form of capital punishment that was once believed to be a humane alternative to previous methods of execution, lethal injection has been recently thrust into chaos due to foreign policies, the actions of pharmaceutical companies, legal objections, and a few high profiled "botched" executions, forcing states to change the agents used in lethal injection protocols or to stop the practice entirely. Very little medical research looking at the efficacy of the practice has been done, but a few attempts have been made by physicians seeking to evaluate what is pharmacologically occurring during executions. Hopefully, the talk will cause listeners to reflect on the current state of capital punishment in the United States.

Objective 1:

To become familiar with the evolution of lethal injection as a form of capital punishment in the US.

Objective 2:

To review the pharmacological agents that have historically and are currently being used.

Objective 3:

To understand the international, economic, political and medical challenges to the practice.