

Epstein: A Forensic Assessment of Autopsy Photo of Epstein's Ligature Marks

The photo is atypical of death by hanging and consistent with strangulation - but "it's complicated" by custodial setting. More investigation is warranted.



MICHAEL D. SELLERS

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[Author's Note: I'm generally reluctant to go down conspiracy theory rabbit holes. But when Jeffrey Epstein's brother released autopsy photographs yesterday showing the ligature marks on Epstein's neck, it got my full attention. I have some professional background in forensic analysis , and it was immediately apparent that the marks shown in the photo are not what you'd typically expect from a suicide by hanging. That doesn't mean it was murder—but it does raise legitimate questions. So I decided to investigate. Here's what I've found so far.]

The Claim by Epstein's Brother

Mark Epstein, Jeffrey's older brother, released an image from the autopsy that shows a deep, horizontal ligature mark across Jeffrey's neck. According to him—and echoed by forensic pathologist Dr. Michael Baden, who observed the autopsy—the mark is inconsistent with suicide by hanging and more consistent with homicidal ligature strangulation.

Their argument centers on:

- The horizontal placement of the mark

- Its low position on the neck
- The depth and uniformity of the impression

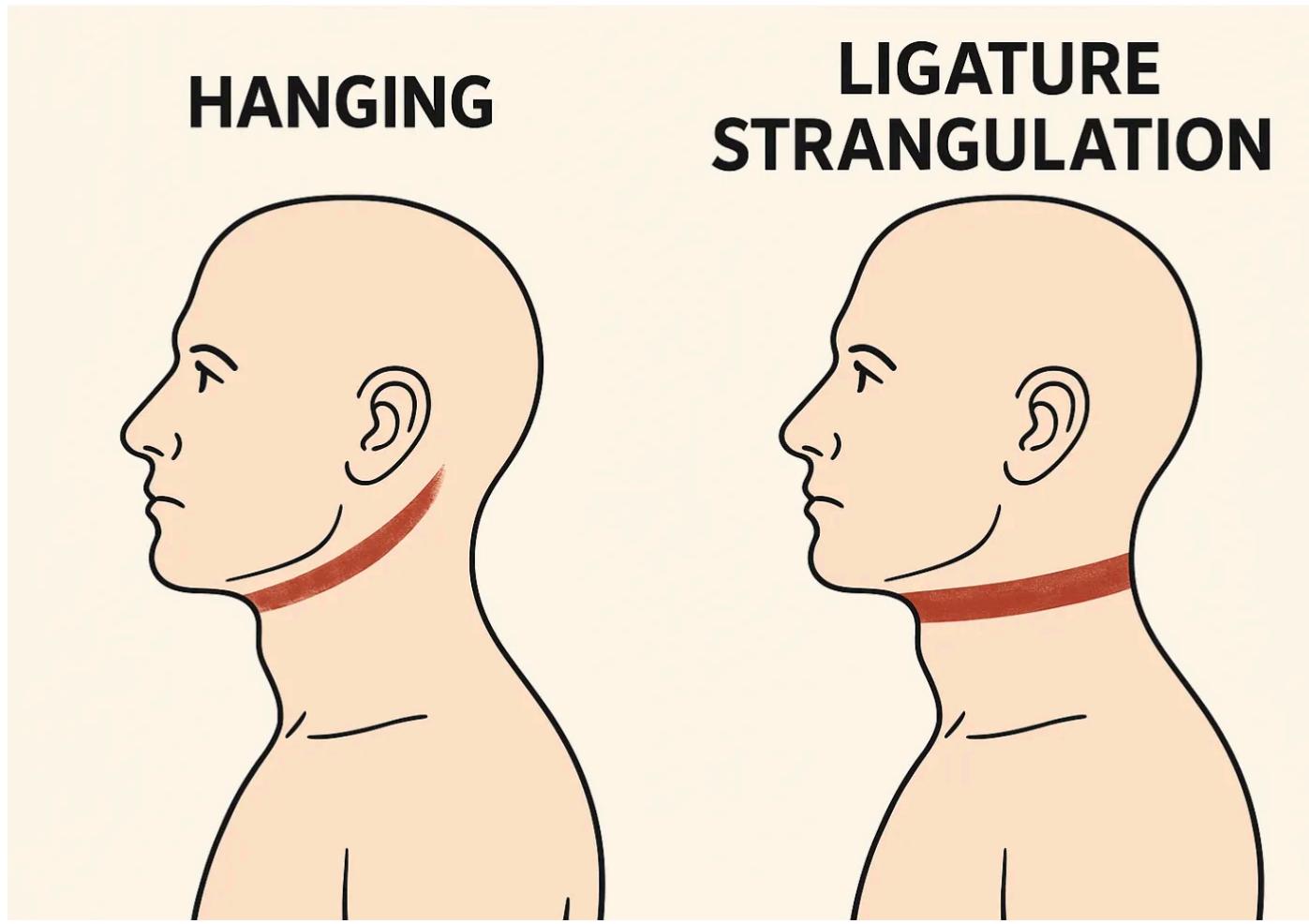
These characteristics, they claim, more closely resemble what one would see in a strangulation scenario, not a hanging.



In the photo, we see a low horizontal ligature mark which is more typical of strangulation – but also we see the mark end and continue only faintly around the back of the neck, which as we will see below, is more typical of

hanging. So we have one indicator pointing to strangulation, but that indicator is incomplete due to the way the mark fades in the back.

The Forensic Science of Hanging vs. Strangulation



As you might reasonably imagine, investigations frequently must determine whether a death is caused by a) hanging or b) strangulation. Because of that there is a great deal of forensic literature available helping distinguish between hanging and strangulation deaths, with ligature marks a key indicator. The typical differences for ligature marks and other indicators are summarized below.

- **Mark Angle**

In hangings, the ligature mark typically **ascends upward** toward the ear following the pull of gravity.

In strangulation, the mark is usually **horizontal and encircling** the neck evenly.

- **Mark Position**

Hanging marks are typically **high on the neck**, under the jaw.

Strangulation marks are often **mid-to-lower neck**, around or just above the Adam's apple.

- **Mark Continuity**

In hangings, the ligature mark may be **incomplete**—especially if a knot interrupts the pressure.

In strangulation, the mark is usually **continuous and unbroken**.

- **Neck Fractures (Hyoid/Thyroid Cartilage)**

Fractures are **rare in suicide by hanging**—occurring in roughly 6% of cases.

In homicidal strangulation, they occur **in up to 70% of cases**.

- **Petechiae (Burst Blood Vessels in Eyes/Face)**

Petechiae may or may not occur in hangings.

They are **frequently present** in strangulation cases due to direct venous compression.

Deaths in Custody – An Important Consideration

There is, however, an important caveat: **hanging deaths in jail or police custody** often do not resemble traditional “drop” hangings. Most involve improvised ligatures (like bedsheets), low anchor points (like bunk beds or door handles), and partial suspension (kneeling, crouching, leaning).

In these cases:

- The **angle of the mark may be flatter**
- The **position may be lower**
- And the physical effects can more closely resemble **strangulation** in some respects

Still, those variations are understood and documented in forensic science—and only **a small percentage (~4-6%)** of hangings display such atypical marks. Most of these occur **specifically in custodial settings.**

Therefore, in analyzing Epstein's ligature marks, it is important to not just assume that because 95% of all hangings look different than his, it is therefore impossible or highly improbable that his death was a suicide. The fact that he was in custody, and had to improvise an "imperfect" hanging scenario, is also a factor.

jkwon.work@gmail.com

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Another Look at the Autopsy Photo





Keeping all the foregoing in mind, let's take a closer look at the autopsy photo released by Epstein's brother.

At first glance, the ligature mark is striking: it's low on the neck, broad, and horizontal—running from one side to the other just above the clavicle. This what initially led Dr. Michael Baden and others to suggest it more closely resembled ligature strangulation than hanging.

But look closer.

As the mark extends around the sides of the neck, it appears to fade and becomes less defined toward the back. This fading is important. In cases of homicidal strangulation, particularly with a ligature, the pressure tends to be evenly applied and continuous. That often results in a complete or nearly complete ring around the neck—especially if the assailant applied pressure from behind or wrapped the ligature tightly on both sides.

In contrast, hanging marks—especially from partial or low-suspension hangings—are frequently incomplete. The pressure is concentrated where the body's weight pulls down, and often fades around the sides and disappears at the back of the neck. That's precisely what seems to be happening in this photo.

So what does that tell us?

- The low position and horizontal angle of the mark still raise questions, because they are not typical of most hangings.
- But the lack of a full circumferential impression, and the way the mark fades toward the back, is more consistent with partial hanging, especially in a custodial setting.
- This detail does not confirm suicide—but it adds nuance and slightly undercuts the idea of a classic strangulation, unless it was done in an unusual way (i.e., pressure applied only from the front).

In other words, the photo contains evidence that supports both sides of the debate. It's neither an open-and-shut case of suicide, nor does it scream definitive homicide. What it does show—clearly—is that this death involved atypical forensic features, and the official explanation deserves more scrutiny than it's been given.

Full Details: How Epstein Was Found

As a next step in analysis, we should consider the full details of how Epstein was found. According to the official report from the Bureau of Prisons:

- Epstein was found kneeling, with a bedsheets tied to the top bunk and wrapped around his neck.
- His buttocks were near the floor, suggesting partial suspension, not full hanging.
- No guards had checked on him for several hours.
- Surveillance cameras in the area were not recording or malfunctioning.
- The ligature was fashioned from torn bedsheets.

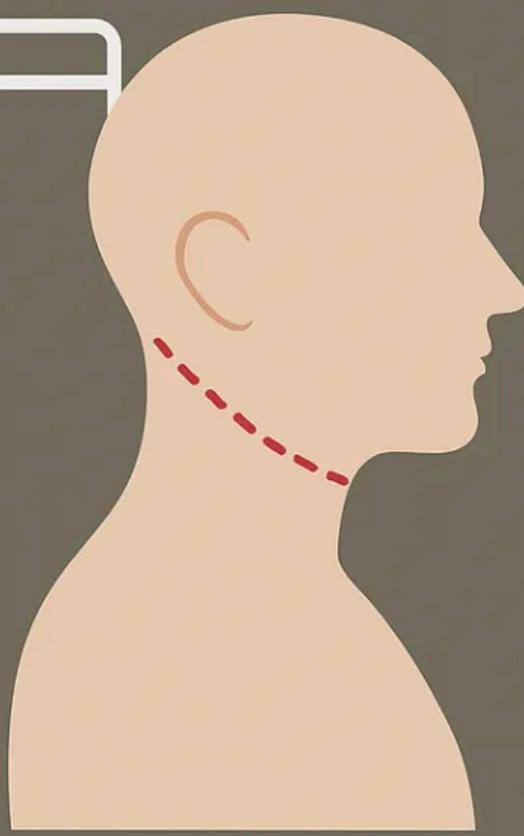
The autopsy report noted:

- A low, horizontal ligature mark
- Fractures to the hyoid bone and thyroid cartilage – more consistent with strangulation than hanging
- No signs of full-body suspension

So, again, factoring in the custodial setting and the specifics of how he was found, here is what would be expected in terms of “most likely” ligature marks, versus “actual” as appears in the autopsy photo.

Epstein Ligature Marks

Expected
Based on Body
Position



As Appears
in Photo

The DOJ Video Release: A Closer Look

The Department of Justice released nearly 11 hours of surveillance footage from the hallway outside Epstein's cell, claiming it was raw, unedited video that disproved any foul play. But the release has drawn fresh scrutiny for two main reasons.

First, there is a missing minute in the footage. The timestamp jumps directly from 11:58:58 p.m. to 12:00:00 a.m., skipping 60 seconds. DOJ officials later said this was due to an old analog system resetting at midnight. But given the case's high profile, the gap raised understandable concerns about transparency.

Second, metadata analysis revealed that the video had been processed using Adobe Premiere Pro, a professional video editing software. The file appears to have been exported multiple times, and spliced together from two source videos—contradicting DOJ's claim that it was “raw” footage. Experts have noted that while some formatting may be necessary for public release, labeling the video as unedited is misleading and would not meet evidentiary standards in court.

Taken together, these issues—combined with the broader context of surveillance malfunctions and falsified guard logs—have deepened public skepticism and renewed calls for independent forensic review.

Conclusion: Something Doesn't Add Up

As noted at the outcome, I resist diving down conspiracy theory rabbit holes and in my experience 9 times out of 10 conspiracy theories are just that — theories that do not match what happened in reality.

But ...

Here, we have:

- A photo showing a mark that deviates from classic hanging patterns, and even though it was an improvised “imperfect” hanging in custody, the deviation is still significant. However, there is also a noticeable fading of

mark that does tend to support “hanging”, or at least is consistent with hanging. So the position and angle of the mark suggest strangulation, but the fade in the rear is more consistent with hanging.

- Significantly, there are fractures present that are uncommon in suicide but common in homicide. This is potentially important.
- This happened in supposedly a secure, highly monitored custodial setting yet there are multiple protocol failures and missing surveillance video. This adds weight to those questioning the results.

My bottom line at this point is the following. None of this proves Epstein was murdered and the possibility exists that the ligature marks are a result of an “imperfect” improvised custodial hanging. But the fractures and the anomalies in the video record leave room for serious doubt by serious people—not just conspiracy theorists. More investigation is warranted.



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Barbara Bullard Jul 14

Thank you for such a thorough investigation. My main concern is why such a high profile pris... would not be more closely monitored. I find it highly unlikely that both guards were asleep during this time. I personally would like to know what type of disciplinary action was taken Against the guards who were sleeping on duty. If none was taken, I find that highly questionable too.

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Darlene Darlene Jul 14

Couldn't the forensics sign have occurred as a result of both homicide and hanging. If he was murdered, then someone took the time to place him on his knees with the bedsheet looking like hanging. If he hung there for hours, the marks that look like a hanging behind the neck could develop after he died. The fractures are super important, especially at a lower height with gravitational force during a hanging. Very interesting!

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