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Optical characterization and analytic modeling of bruised skin - taking physics into the courtroom

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Skin bruises might be important evidence in cases of blunt trauma, abuse and domestic violence. Children and elderly people are susceptible to this kind of trauma, and are not always able to tell the story behind the injury. Visual inspection is currently the method of choice to evaluate skin bruises, although it is well known that it should not be trusted. The error rate in estimating the age of a bruise by visual inspection is about 50%. There is thus a need for developing more objective methods for such evaluation. However, evaluation of bruises is not only a medical or forensic challenge; it is an interdisciplinary challenge requiring expertise from several fields. This talk will describe how physics and optical methods can be used to develop solutions for a medical problem.

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