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COPPOLINO TRIAL TOLD OF DRUG TEST

**Toxicologist Says He Found
Acid in Brain of Dead Wife**

By **HOMER BIGART**

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NAPLES, Fla., April 13—Despite attempts by the defense counsel to deride his testimony, the chief toxicologist of New York City today stated that the first wife of Dr. Carl A. Coppolino could have died of an overdose of succinylcholine, the muscle-relaxing drug often used in surgery.

The toxicologist, Dr. Charles Joseph Umberger, insisted that the experimental process by which he had isolated elements of the hard-to-detect drug in the brain tissues of Mrs. Carmela Coppolino had produced findings of "reasonable scientific certainty."

Dr. Coppolino, a 34-year-old anesthesiologist, is charged with injecting a lethal overdose of succinylcholine into his wife on Aug. 28, 1965, in their home on Longboat Key, near Sarasota. This is Dr. Coppolino's second murder trial within five months. Last December, he was ac-

quitted of the murder of his former neighbor, Lieut. Col. William E. Farber, in Middletown, N. J.

The whole day was taken up with the testimony of Dr. Umberger, a gray-haired avuncular man who enlivened his highly technical explanations by remarking at one point that the available literature on succinic acid and choline, the main components of succinylcholine, was "loused up."

Spars With Bailey

When F. Lee Bailey, the defense counsel, tried to draw him out on the pharmaceutical qualities of the drug Dr. Umberger explained with a tired smile that this was not his field of expertise, adding cheerfully: "You lawyers slay me."

Dr. Umberger, chief of the toxicological laboratory of the chief medical examiner's office in New York, described how, in experimental tests ranging over five months, he was finally able to isolate a quantity of succinic acid from the brain tissue of Mrs. Coppolino. He also determined the presence of choline in her brain, he said, but he was unable to give any quantitative estimate of the choline.

After questioning by Mr. Bailey, Dr. Umberger admitted that succinic acid was nontoxic in itself and that "every living person has succinic acid in his body."