

Certainty of forensic evidence



The litigants have always found it difficult to form a belief in judicial inquiries. That is why they appeal and further appeal until they reach the apex court. The degree of certainty attainable from the decision of a judge is always not a high one. A judge cannot be absolutely certain like the mathematician, nor is it possible to prove a fact in a court to a point of rigid mathematical demonstration, since the matter mostly depends upon human testimony (oral evidence) which cannot attain mathematical certainty.

But the revolutionary impact of forensic sciences on legal decisions necessitates the judicial decisions to sift from what may be false, erroneous, misconceived, or contradictory materials being placed before the judges, to find the true facts of the matter in issue between the litigants and to come to a correct decision. Today forensic sciences have made an inroad in all matters relating to civil, criminal, and regulatory laws, and perhaps even in non-litigious matters.

Forensic sciences have grown beyond leaps and bounds and practically there is no scientific discipline which has not embraced "forensics." "Dental forensics," a term more appropriate with the present-day terminology, otherwise known as "forensic dentistry" or "forensic odontology" or "bite mark evidence expertise" or "tooth identification technique" is known to us from time immemorial, as we can find from ancient literature, as the roots of other physical evidences being used to crack crimes. The seed for modern

dental forensics was sown in India by the Forensic Science Society of India in 1986 by organizing the first ever National Workshop on Forensic Odontology in Chennai.


I am happy to notice today that dental forensics has a firm footing in India with a strong united academic body "Indian Association of Forensic Odontology" (IAFO) which is organizing its 9th national conference this year and has brought-out a periodical "Journal of Forensic Dental Sciences" (JFDS).

My anguish is that in spite of all the spectacular growth, why the end users, namely, the police have not made use of this potential branch of forensic sciences in their investigation. Crime records show that a sizeable number of sexual offences occur every year and they are always on the increase and the conviction rate is not very convincing. The reason for this state of affair is the failure on the part of police investigators to recognize and evaluate dental evidence in sexual offences, though it is common sense that every sexual offence is bound to be associated with dental evidence.

The only way to obviate this problem is to enrol police officers in large numbers in IAFO and to make them involve in its activities so that they understand and appreciate dental forensics. The dental experts also should involve themselves in participating annual police officers' conferences and also extend periodical lectures in police training institutions.

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| Access this article online | |
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| Website: www.jfds.org | Quick Response Code  |
| DOI: 10.4103/0975-1475.92142 | |

How to cite this article: Sekharan PC. Certainty of forensic evidence. J Forensic Dent Sci 2011;3:51.