B61 Ethical Considerations in Forensic Science

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be given an overview of ethical issues and the problems they cause in the forensic science field.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by enabling the forensic science community to observe patterns of unethical behavior in the various fields of forensic science. This data will answer questions such as what should one do if one suspects a col- league is being unethical? Which actions are unethical? Who judges what is unethical? By looking into such studies, forensic scientists will gain information important to all scientists, particularly forensic scientists. Observing the forensic science community enables the information to be most beneficial to the people who need it most.

This paper will present the work done at West Virginia University to determine what ethical issues are most prevalent in the forensic science community. Proper ethical behavior is required by scientists making complex decisions about the interpretation of data, about which problems to pursue, and about when to conclude an experiment, all which help to improve the quality of forensic science. Important skills gained by studying ethics include improved ethical awareness, knowledge of relevant standards (AAFS, IAI, ASCLD, etc.), skill in ethical decision making, and appropriate ethical actions. Scenarios will be presented and the ethical con- siderations involved with each discussed. Also, ethical considerations forensic scientists should be aware of will be discussed.

Ethical considerations are an important part of science. Having a code of ethics assures an organization, its members, and its affiliates that the highest quality of professional and personal conduct will be promoted. It is important to cooperate with others within the profession, promote improvement through research, and disseminate such advancement in an effort to make more effective analyses. Proper scientific ethics includes refraining from providing any material misrepresentation of education, training, experience or area of expertise. It also includes refraining from exercising professional or personal conduct adverse to the best interests and purposes of the forensic science community.

The research presented is an excerpt from a free online course offered at West Virginia University. Through a grant provided by the National Institute of Justice (2001-RC-CX-D003 and 2003-RC-CX-K001), the course is geared toward all forensic professionals. It covers topics such as the history of ethics, science and research, forensic ethics, unethical behavior, and the future of ethics in criminal investigations. This presen- tation will hopefully encourage attendees to look at themselves and their work environments to determine if they are facing ethical dilemmas. Solutions are provided to deal with ethical dilemmas in the workplace.

This research will enable the forensic science community to observe patterns of unethical behavior in the various fields of forensic science. This data will answer questions such as what amshould one do if one suspects a colleague is being unethical? Which actions are unethical? Who judges what is unethical? By looking into such studies, forensic scientists will gain information important to all scientists, particularly forensic scientists. Observing the forensic science community enables the information to be most beneficial to the people who need it most.

Ethics, Research, Falsification

 ** Presenting Author*