



Odontology Section – 2008

F18 Forensic Odontology - Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We Are Going?

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The goal of this presentation is to offer the attendee a comparison of the demographic data of members of the Odontology Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences over a ten year period. It will compare and contrast the composition of the section and also outline the eras in development of forensic odontology and provide some insight into the potential future developments which may impact the discipline.

The presentation will impact the forensic science community by stimulating discussion as to the future role of forensic odontology and how identified needs can be met.

A convenience sample was made from the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Members' directory from 1997 and 2007. The total number of section members, membership status, location and other data were extracted and placed in SPSS 11.5 for analysis. The results will be presented so that the attendees will see the changes in the demographics of membership in the Odontology section over the past ten years. Trends that may be identified will be discussed.

A review of the development of forensic odontology was undertaken to determine the milestones within the discipline to help the attendee to understand developments in the past that may help to identify future challenges and opportunities.

The presentation will provide an overview of the following eras of forensic odontology: historic era, organization era, and scientific era. The events that define each of these eras will be described and the trends that occurred during them will be delineated.

Historically the disciplines that comprise forensic odontology have been described as dental identification, bite mark analysis, and clinical examinations. The former two categories are relatively specific, with the latter covering a broad spectrum of modalities.

It is the presenter's opinion that "clinical examinations" should be expanded to include outreach to non-forensic dentists and members of other forensic fields. This may include a closer relationship with forensic anthropology and pathology from cases of genocide and crimes against humanity to providing a collaborative relationship with the local medical examiners/coroners.

Also targeted would be those other individuals and agencies that interact with members of the population that may be able to identify those who may require the services of a forensic odontologist. Mandatory reporters of abuse, including teachers and health care workers and others who are in contact with large populations of individuals could provide a vast reservoir of persons who have this potential need.

Outreach to the dental profession regarding standards of care and ethical issues that may help to prevent negative outcomes for the patient as well as the dental practitioner should also be included. Widespread dissemination of best dental practices both in prevention and treatment could improve the overall treatment of dental patients as well as limit the exposure of dental professionals to malpractice suits, disciplinary actions and other negative consequences of unwanted results of dental treatment.

This broadening of the mission of forensic odontology would also provide a challenge for those in the educational process to meet these expanding needs.

Overall, those within the discipline of forensic odontology should be looking at potential opportunities in the local, national and international community to ensure that challenges are identified and future needs can be met.

Forensic Odontology, History, Members