



## Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2009

### I19 Forensic Psychiatry in Turkey: A Cross-Sectional Study

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the Republic of Turkey's forensic psychiatric expert system and learn how to prevent the contradictory opinions in forensic psychiatric cases.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by providing a useful and important forensic psychiatry study.

Forensic psychiatry is a branch of forensic sciences which focuses on the interface of law and mental health. It may include psychiatric evaluation in a wide variety of legal matters as well as clinical work with perpetrators and victims in civil or criminal litigations. The numbers of forensic psychiatric cases are increasing all over the world, day-by-day, as in Turkey. Expert opinion is of vital importance in the trial process, the final decision of the lawsuits.

The Republic of Turkey has approximately 70 million people and, as a result, lawsuit numbers are very high. In Turkey, judicial authorities receive expert opinions about forensic psychiatry from various psychiatric hospitals medical boards. Generally, views obtained from these boards are sent to Forensic Medicine Speciality Committee-IV which is the relevant specialization unit of The Council of Forensic Medicine of Turkey. This committee, the most experienced forensic board with psychiatric expertise in Turkey, reevaluates the referred cases. The committee, in Istanbul, is comprised of forensic medicine specialists, general psychiatrists, child psychiatrists, and neurologists. On occasion, discrepancies regarding the same case are encountered. Of course, expertise evaluations in forensic psychiatry require special experience and approach. In this study, the reasons and frequencies of this discrepancies and consistencies in the same cases were evaluated.

To this purpose, judicial files of cases appealed to Forensic Medicine Speciality Committee-IV between June 1, 2005 and October 1, 2005 were examined and the results given by Committee-IV were compared with reports prepared previously from other expertise boards. Cases were identified randomly but in a certain methodology and measure including demographic and other datas, performed in a face to face interview. While comparing these decisions, variables including positive predictive values, negative predictive values, sensitivity, specificity, and parallel diagnosing were assessed and findings were compared with similar other studies.

As a result, it was identified that the judgements given by Forensic Medicine Speciality Committee-IV for some cases were parallel to judgements given previously for the same cases. There were, however, contradictions for remaining cases. The essence of dispensation of justice is to reflect equal evaluations pertaining to similar matters for everyone. This is important to constitute a society of individuals who live in peace and receive equal in legislative procedures.

In this presentation, Turkey's forensic psychiatric expertise system will be introduced. Secondly, the results of the present study will be disclosed. Finally the prevention of contradictory judgements given by different experts in same forensic cases will be discussed. Perhaps, it is mandatory to follow cardinal principles and rules in all areas of expertise, especially those in which concrete data are less available such as psychiatry. For this purpose, identifying the elements of guidelines and professionals being amenable to these guidelines is a necessity for effective application of justice. Coordination and collaboration of experts is necessary to elicit this goal.

**Forensic Psychiatry, Expert Witness, Turkey**