



Odontology Section – 2010

F41 Identification: It Isn't Magic

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a greater understanding of the need to have the appropriate forensic experts provide their expertise in cases of missing and unidentified persons.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by serving as a reminder to those involved in missing and unidentified person cases that review, interpretation, corroboration, and the recording of accurate scientific evidence are the keys to victim identification. The goal is to highlight these functions. Experience has shown how easy it is to overlook or misinterpret scientific evidence.

Due to the complex nature of these cases, inaccuracies in the interpretation or recording of evidence pertinent to such cases can delay or hinder identification. Another key to accuracy is to allow another forensic scientist to corroborate findings, when possible. This second pair of eyes is an asset in the review process and reduces the possibility of misinterpreting or otherwise missing key evidence that may actually lead to identification. Diligence, scrutiny, and thoughtful review of the scientific evidence by those who are appropriately trained and experienced in their disciplines will be the best path to success. This is crucial to ensure scientific accuracy for comparison and ultimate scientific identification.

Law enforcement agencies are responsible for the data entry of cases in their jurisdiction. Once entered into a database, this information will be compared to available data to determine if any existing cases may be a possible match. The accuracy of the available data is therefore crucial to provide an effective matching process.

Case studies will be presented involving dental and anthropologic information as an example of the diligence required when documenting and recording pertinent information used in the identification process. Providing information just to fill a database will not magically produce identification.

Identification, Missing Persons, Unidentified Persons