



Jurisprudence Section – 2011

E20 Firearms Identification: A Shot in the Dark?

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After attending the presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of the issues related to firearms identification and the expression of an expert's opinion.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by supporting the Jurisprudence Section's Forensic Science 101 initiative.

Critics of forensic science have been taking aim at the firearms identification discipline for a long time, and their target has recently been more clearly defined by the 2009 National Academy of Sciences Report (NAS), *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. Nevertheless, the courts continue to admit testimony concerning the traditional task of confirming that a particular cartridge or bullet was fired from a particular gun or that two or more cartridges or bullets were fired from the same gun. However, the more recent judicial trend has been to limit the opinion testimony to non-probabilistic terms. The difficulty is determining how to express the expert's opinion. This presentation will give attendees a primer on the comparison of bullets and shell casings. In addition, the nature of the firearm identification expert's opinion and terminology will be discussed in light of the NAS report and the ASCLD/LAB accreditation criteria on report writing. **Firearms Identification, Ballistics, Firearms**