



F25 Quality Assurance in an International Perspective and IOFOS Recommendations

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of quality assurance in forensic odontology. Also the difficulties of quality assurance on an international level will be appreciated and knowledge of the IOFOS' work and recommendations will be acquired.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by increasing awareness of quality assurance and systems for such assurance. Also the IOFOS recommendations may not be so well known in the United States, but could be of use also for American forensic odontologists.

According to the law in many countries, medical and dental work should be subject to quality assurance. Thus also forensic medicine and forensic odontology has a duty to implement systems for quality assurance. What quality assurance actually is may be considered differently and it also may consist of many different elements. All efforts to make sure the quality fulfill a minimum requirement and also effort to improve the quality may be called quality assurance. Most important may be descriptions of procedures to be followed in the work; however, also important is the quality of how the presentation is, for instance in the form of the quality of the written report.

Other aspects of quality assurance are quality improvement, registration of deviation from normal, and registration of accidents. Education of the expert and level of competency is part of quality assurance. Quality assurance may be a so called "paper tiger" if it is not implemented and followed up in some way. Quality assurance is the responsibility of leaders. Except for within an ID-commission, forensic odontologists operate on an individual basis. Thus there is no authority to control if procedures are followed.

To agree upon procedures on a national level is difficult. Therefore, in most countries each dentist must have his own procedure descriptions. It is even more difficult to establish procedures on an international level that people may agree upon to the extent that they are willing to follow them. Except for ethical rules there have been no known attempts to establish international systems of quality assurance. From the beginning, it was clear it would be difficult when the IOFOS decided to come up with recommendation for procedure descriptions in the various fields of forensic odontology in 2003.

In 2004, an international meeting was held in Norway with participating forensic odontologist from a number of countries representing all continents except America and Australia. It showed that they could agree upon very little and some would think one step was important others would think a different step was important. To reach some degree of agreement it was decided that only procedure steps should be suggested on an international level, not how each step should be carried out. We felt that should be left to quality assurance in each country or society.

There was a great deal of disagreement about the steps. Only those where there was full agreement is a stage recommended as obligatory. Others, although reasonable enough, are only recommended and may be omitted. To implement the recommendations we advise each forensic odontologist to write in their report that they are following the IOFOS recommendations for quality assurance. Also we advise each society to see if they may accept these recommendations for their members and thus sign a contract with IOFOS.

Quality Assurance, International, IOFOS