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### E67 The “CSI Effect”: The Barristers and the Bench

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the impact of the real and perceived extent the so-called “CSI effect” has, specifically on the barristers and the bench. While research into jurors’ understanding of forensic evidence based on forensic-related television shows has been researched extensively, little research has focused on the perception of this phenomenon by lawyers and judges.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing insight into the real and/or perceived “CSI effect” on barristers and the bench. This data provides the background and preliminary findings of how forensic-related television shows might contribute to whether or not the so-called “CSI effect” presides in the minds of not only jurors, but of lawyers and judges and whether or not this perception potentially changes the structure/architecture of a given criminal trial. The presentation outlines possible solutions for judges, experts, the crown, and the defense.

The purpose of this project was to develop insight into the factors that affect and influence lawyers’ and judges’ perceptions and understanding of the impact of forensic-type television shows. The shows’ fictional portrayal of crime scene investigations has prompted real demands for DNA and other scientific evidence from prosecutors and defense lawyers in the courtroom who believe that this type of evidence is warranted. Submissions to forensic laboratories have increased due to the fact that both the prosecution and the defense fear that their cases will be lost to the jury if, for example, forensic evidence is not included as part of the evidence. It is what lawyers and judges refer to as the “CSI effect.” This phenomenon was examined relying on the messages from the barristers and the bench. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 lawyers and judges regarding how they are, and have been, affected by the introduction of the “CSI effect” concept.

The findings of this research suggest that potential jurors are educated, but not always correctly, about forensic evidence from watching crime-related television shows; however, the concerns raised in this research are the same for potential jurors, lawyers, and judges. The findings suggest that there is a real expectation for forensic evidence, and that this expectation is shared among all members of the “truth finding committee.” Whether there is a real or a perceived “CSI effect” on jurors, this inquiry suggests that there is a “CSI effect” on the bench and the bar.

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