

### I24 A Sample of Men Convicted of or Charged With a Sex Offense: Penile Plethysmography (PPG) Results

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**Learning Overview:** The objective of this presentation includes informing those involved in the assessment of persons who have sexually offended of considerations of the use of PPG as it relates to diagnosis and, in turn, risk of reoffending

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** The goal of this presentation is to discuss the data of a sample of men who underwent PPG testing to help standardize the assessment and add to the literature base of the use of PPG in this population.

The use of physiological measures in evaluations of sexual offenders has mixed reviews.<sup>1,3</sup> PPG has been called the gold standard of physiologically assessing male sexual arousal. It can be used to aid in the diagnosis of paraphilic disorders by identifying paraphilic sexual arousal. Although it has been shown to be valid and reliable in some studies, the use of the PPG in evaluations of sexual offenders has also been the subject of criticism<sup>1-4</sup> There has been a call for more research on the use of PPG in assessing men convicted or charged with a sex offense.

This presentation will focus on results from PPGs administered to a sample of approximately 80 men undergoing sexual behavior evaluations. The sample included men referred for a pretrial evaluation, assessment of sexual violence risk under a state's Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) Act, and professional sexual boundary violations. Many of the evaluations were assessing dangerousness for civil commitment under the SVP Act, which requires a prior arrest for a sexually violent offense and the presence of a mental abnormality or personality disorder that makes the examinee likely to engage in acts of future sexual violence if not civilly committed in a secure setting for long-term care and treatment. These evaluations took place in the Sexual Behavior Clinic and Lab of a large academic medical center in the southeastern United States from 2011 to 2018. Data will be presented on the number of PPG tests that did not meet minimum requirements for interpretation and the likely reasons as to why these tests were invalid, including rates of suspected dissimulation. Additionally, this presentation will describe the PPG scenarios that generated the highest level of sexual arousal for the whole sample and in men who only offended against children. Differences in level of responding between men with only child victims and those with pubescent/adult victims will also be discussed.

#### Reference(s):

1. Marshall, W.L. (2014). Phallometric Assessments of Sexual Interests: An Update. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 16(1), 1-7.
2. Marshall, W.L. and Y.M. Fernandez (2001). Phallometry in Forensic Practice. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 1(2), 77 - 87.
3. McPhail, I.V., Hermann, C.A., Fernane, S., Fernandez, Y.M., Nunes, K.L., and Cantor, J.M. (2017; OnlineFirst Edition). Validity in Phallometric Testing for Sexual Interests in Children: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Assessment*.
4. O'Shaughnessy, R. (2015). Commentary: Phallometry in Court—Problems Outweigh Benefits. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online* 43(2), 154-158.

**Sexual Offenders, Penile Plethysmography (PPG), Sexually Violent Predators**