



S1 Insane or Just Bad? The Anatomy of the Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI) Defense

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Learning Overview: Attendees will have a greater understanding of what it means to establish a Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI) defense, the risks and benefits of the defense, and a greater appreciation for issues facing the mentally ill in the criminal justice system.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: The NGRI defense is not widely understood. This presentation will impact the forensic science community by helping to demystify the history and present state of the defense in the United States.

The theme for the 2019 American Academy of Forensic Sciences meeting is *Diligence, Dedication, and Devotion*. To illustrate this, the 2019 Interdisciplinary Symposium focuses on the diligence, dedication, and devotion that goes into presenting or opposing an NGRI defense. Recently, there has been more attention paid to the problem of mentally ill patients being treated in the criminal justice system. The symptoms and impairments most mentally ill defendants demonstrate do not make them an insanity defense. Even when the insanity defense is appropriately claimed, there is usually still controversy around its use.

The insanity defense is often misunderstood by the public because of misinformation and inaccurate media portrayals of the defense. Even within the court system, there is misunderstanding among judges, defense attorneys, and prosecutors as to what the defense means and when it is appropriate to use it, or even why the defense exists at all. This symposium will explain the history of the defense and will illustrate many aspects of the defense from the point of view of different court personnel and clinicians. Panelists will also discuss: criminal responsibility of juveniles, the role of neuropsychological testing, jury instructions, and the jury's perspective. Additionally, two experienced attorneys will provide their perspective on a recent high-profile case in New York City that took five-and-a-half years of intense diligence, dedication, and devotion to prepare for and try. A sitting judge (and member of the Jurisprudence Section) will speak on her experiences with this defense in Pennsylvania, and a forensic psychiatrist who has lived and practiced in New Zealand for many years will provide an international perspective via her experiences with the insanity defense and with high-profile cases.

A question-and-answer discussion session at the end of the symposium will enable attendees to ask questions of the speakers and for the speakers to ask questions of their fellow panelists. The goal of the panel is to educate attendees on questions of criminal responsibility as they pertain to people with significant mental health issues at the time of the crime and on juveniles, primarily by focusing on the NGRI defense.

NGRI, Insanity, Psychiatry