

ASCLD TRAIN THE DIRECTOR
Building Sustainable Credibility in Forensic Science
Communication

Thursday September 5th, 2024, 1:00PM EST, TEAMS
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The high value placed on forensic information in the criminal justice process is demonstrated by the fallout resulting when questions are raised as to the validity of methods used, deficiencies in the understanding of the limitations of results, or uncertainties around the professional expertise or ethical practices of the provider of the information. To effectively act as the “speaker” for the scientific evidence in court, forensic science needs to have credibility.

Forensic science, since its origins as a scientific approach to address the public need to solve crime, has become an ever-present feature of the criminal justice process. As the field of forensic science and the disciplines that comprise it have grown dramatically over the past century, so has the demand for forensic evidence within court proceedings. However, this very public rise has not come without significant questioning, particularly in recent decades, with a growing awareness of unvalidated methodologies, issues in the communication of findings, translation of forensic science into a legal environment and a lack of acceptance for self-correction impacting the trust placed in forensic science. Sentinel events for the field have signaled a change in general perceptions: trust in forensic information cannot be assumed, just because it is nominated as “science”.

For a field of science to have credibility, the scientific community making the claims must demonstrate the hallmarks of credibility, such as transparency in research, robust error detection and control and an emphasis on self-correction and calibration. By rethinking the positioning of forensic science and its role, new opportunities to build sustainable credibility can be identified.

This webinar will discuss approaches that can strengthen the credibility of forensic science within the community and with investigative and judicial stakeholders, including current examples. Topics will include enhancing the validation of forensic science methodologies through registered reports, using systematic reviews to establish credible research, improving returns on the investment in error detection and control through benchmarking of quality system data and strategies to improve transparency in reporting to communicate the limitations of forensic information with external stakeholders.

Learning objectives:

1. Attendees will learn about the theory of credibility in science, and how this can be applied to the communication of forensic science with internal and external stakeholders.
2. Attendees will learn examples of current strategies to improve credible communication of forensic science.
3. Attendees will learn about future research and approaches to enhancing credibility in the communication of forensic science.

FEATURING:



MAX HOUCK

An award-winning international expert in the forensic

sciences, Dr. Max M. Houck has over 30 years of expertise in casework, research, management, and writing. His casework includes the Branch Davidian Investigation, the September 11 attacks on the Pentagon, the D.B. Cooper case, and the West Memphis Three, among hundreds of others including his casework at the FBI Laboratory. Dr. Houck is one of the most published professionals in his field and his work is among the top 2% of legal and forensic medicine researchers in the U.S. He is Editor-in-Chief of Forensic Science International: Synergy, the first Gold Open Access and Registered Reports journal in the discipline. Dr. Houck is also an Editorial Board member of Nature Science Studies.



ANNA HEAVEY

Based in Perth, Western Australia,

Anna Heavey (BSc, MBA, AFAIM) is a forensic scientist with over 20 years' experience in the field of forensic biology and quality management. She holds roles on national and international working groups and advisory bodies, including as immediate past-Chair of the Australia New Zealand Quality Specialist Advisory Group providing expert advice and coordination on quality matters to the forensic agencies of Australia and New Zealand. Anna is an award-winning author and presenter on the topic of forensic quality management and is currently undertaking her PhD candidacy at Curtin University.