

## Crime Scene

### Forensic Science-the Quality Assurer?

*Dr. Peter De Forest, Forensic Consultants, United States; Dr. Rebecca Bucht*

Abstract: Forensic science and the information obtained from a knowledgeable interpretation of physical evidence have a huge, relatively untapped, inherent ability to provide a quality assurance service to the criminal justice system which they serve.

The effects of cognitive bias on forensic science laboratory work and strategies to mitigate that bias continue to be discussed and researched, as well they should be. But laboratory testing is only a part of the physical evidence chain and the physical evidence chain is only a part of the investigative and adjudicative continuum. One should be at least equally concerned about the effects of cognitive bias on investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys and the triers of fact. The information obtained from a knowledgeable interpretation of physical evidence has the ability to provide facts that are potentially far more reliable than other evidence such as eyewitnesses or confessions.

In order for the forensic sciences to properly provide this quality control function, several conditions need to be met. It is imperative that forensic scientists be present at the crime scene. They need to have authority over the items collected as well as which forensic examinations and analyses are requested. A forensic scientist's involvement is also needed to ensure a correct interpretation of the physical evidence record within the context of the case. Finally, strategies to ensure the efficient dissemination of this forensic science information to the investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and trier(s) of fact need to be considered.