

The Role of Forensic Odontology



Editor in Chief busy in forensic odontology project

Since the late nineteenth century, forensic odontology has gradually established itself as important, and often indispensable specialism of general dentistry. Forensic odontology covers diverse areas, namely identification of human remains, age estimation, bite mark analysis, (child) abuse, facial reconstruction, and litigation relating to malpractice and criminal proceedings... Much of its expertise is based on advances in knowledge in relation to dentistry in general, fundamental research and clinical experience. Particularly over the past two decades, there has also been increasing research on specific forensic dental matters. Dentistry has much to offer law enforcement in the detection and solution of crime or in civil proceedings. Forensic dental fieldwork requires an interdisciplinary knowledge of dental science. Most often the role of the forensic odontologist is to establish a person's identity. Teeth, with their physiologic variations, pathoses and effects of therapy, record information that remains throughout life and beyond. The teeth may also be used as weapons and, under certain circumstances, may leave information about the identity of the biter. Forensic odontology has an important role in the recognition of abuse among

persons of all ages. Dental professionals have a major role to play in keeping accurate dental records and providing all necessary information so that legal authorities may recognize malpractice, negligence, fraud or abuse, and identify unknown humans. The forensic odontologist has assumed a more visible role in the last decade, having been called upon repeatedly to assist both law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. It has become quite common for dentists to establish the identity of unknown bodies; to quickly and positively identify the victims of mass disasters such as airliner crashes, floods, and earthquakes; as well as to provide testimony in court concerning bite marks or other matters that require dental expertise. Litigation directed at dental defendants for failure to diagnose, properly treat, or obtain valid consent from plaintiff patients is also on the rise. In each of these fields, dentists who have been specially trained in or who have devoted their practices to the dental diagnostic sciences have been looked to widely as experts. So, forensic odontology should be considered in dentistry curriculum dental council of India.

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