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Principle-based ethics in forensic science: Rise, fall and impact of Combined Probability of Inclusion/Exclusion (CPI/E) in DNA mixtures

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There appears to be little understanding of the necessity of principle-based ethics in forensic science, and its application is uncommon. Literature is replete with discussions of forensic science ethical practices and exemplars in general and within specific disciplines. Current literature and discussions focus mainly on codes of conduct of associations, organizations and roles of scientific, technical working groups. Ethical codes of conduct are thus established on organizational mandates, rules, competency/proficiency guidelines, legal interpretations, and negotiated guidelines of credentialing or authoritative entities. It is additionally argued that the current status ethics in forensic science is of a values-based nature, void of necessary foundational principles (as presented). Values-based ethics are subjective in nature that morphs via specific discipline, circumstance, or resulting outcomes—right or wrong depending on one's values or culture. As such forensic science has suffered a loss of confidence with its application in the criminal justice system by the public with recent revelations of problems with hair analysis, bite mark testimony, bullet lead analysis, CODIS allele frequency errors, and DNA mixture interpretations. Principles are objective natural laws of the human experience that do not change with situation, time, culture or circumstance, and are at the core of every successful individual, entity and institution. The rise, fall and impact of CPI/E in DNA mixture interpretation will be presented from the perspective of principle-based ethics that have been known for hundreds of years to help restore the public confidence in the application of forensic science in the criminal justice environment.

Biography

George W Adams is a former National Director of National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs, 2011/2015), Program Manager at University of North Texas Center for Human Identification (2005/2011) and the author of "Utilizing Forensic Technologies for Unidentified Human Remains: Death Investigation Resources, Strategies, and Disconnects" (Taylor & Francis, 2015). He holds a Master of Arts in Criminology and Criminal Justice (UTA -2013) and Bachelor of Business Administration (1972), and a member of Texas Municipal Police Officers Association. His research pursues two vectors— unbiased understanding of forensic DNA application and elevating the empirical nature of criminal investigations.

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