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Global Professional Responsibilities of Forensic Scientists

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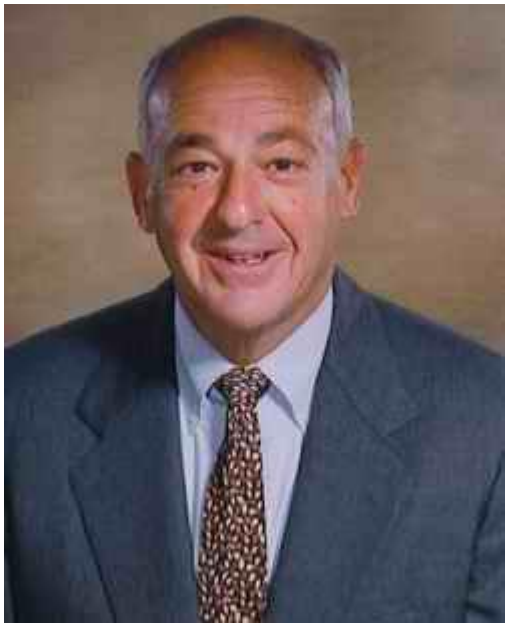

Important and highly sensitive role of forensic scientists in international death investigations. Utilization of universal knowledge and skills in resolving controversial matters and helping to achieve social justice.

What do DNA testing, the O.J. Simpson murder trial, and "CSI" television programs have in common? All have contributed significantly to the ever increasing fascination and interest in the field of forensic science, not only in the United States, but throughout the world. Although the history of utilizing forensic scientific techniques and general concepts (simple and crude as they may have been in comparison to modern day practices) in the investigation of homicides and other criminal acts dates back thousands of years, it is doubtful that anyone would have predicted the phenomenal growth and development of this profession that we have witnessed in the past two decades.

...Television shows, movies, and fictional novels that prominently feature forensic scientists as the major characters, with conspiracies and crimes that rely upon discovery and solution by forensic pathologists, toxicologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, questioned document examiners and criminalists, have come to dominate their respective commercial categories...

Television shows, movies, and fictional novels that prominently feature forensic scientists as the major characters, with conspiracies and crimes that rely upon discovery and solution by forensic pathologists, toxicologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, questioned document examiners and criminalists, have come to dominate their respective commercial categories. More importantly for societal purposes, insofar as both the civil and criminal legal arenas are concerned, contributions made by forensic scientists around the world have exceeded any other field of academic endeavor in achieving social justice. Whether it be the investigation of an individual murder or genocide; providing the sexual assault of one woman or the rape and pillage of an entire village; analysis of a single forged document or the Enron scandal; the determination of a single defendant's sanity or the evaluation of the mindset and acts of a tyrannical dictator - more and more, forensic scientists are being called upon to methodically, objectively, and impartially provide answers for local, national, and international law enforcement agencies, judges, and other governmental entities, as well as for private citizens, corporations and various other groups.

...Forensic science has no geographic boundaries. By its very nature, it is global in nature. Therein lies one of its greatest assets - it can be called upon at any time, applied, and utilized by trained, competent, and experienced experts in the country in the investigation and analysis of almost all criminal acts and many kinds of civil litigation...

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The author has participated in many such cases over the past three decades, individually and sometimes collaboratively, in Asia, Africa, the Mideast, Europe, Australia, the Carribean, and Central America. Some of these investigations have been undertaken at the behest of private citizens, and more often, under the official aegis of a foreign government. A few of these challenging, complex, and highly controversial matters have been extremely important and significantly relevant with regard to national elections, government policies, and even international diplomatic relations.

Forensic scientists have played key roles in helping to defuse and resolve highly sensitive and potentially explosive allegations that occasionally have global ramifications. What more noble and worthwhile accomplishments can there be for individuals in our professional field of endeavor?

Editorials - Cumulative Index

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