

Author's Response

Sir,

Dr. Siegel claims that we misstated the history and evolution of FEPAC. The history as we described it in the paper is noted in FEPAC's own accreditation guide, where they explain the history of the commission. In particular, http://ag.ca.gov/meetings/tf/pdf/FEPAC_Accreditation_Standards.pdf.

The text discussing the *ad hoc* committee follows:

"Acknowledging the importance of an accreditation system for academic programs built on the foundation of TWGED, the AAFS in 2002 established an *ad hoc* committee, called Forensic Education Program Accreditation Committee, to explore issues related to the development of such an accreditation system. In 2004, the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission became an official standing committee of the AAFS and awarded its first accreditation in February 2004."

If the history of FEPAC is different from that described in their own materials, it would perhaps be beneficial for them to revise said materials to better reflect their history. In addition, during the review process, one of the reviewers made several comments regarding the FEPAC portion, its history, the naming, etc. The researcher had the distinct impression that this reviewer was a FEPAC member or was in some way associated with FEPAC and therefore someone upon whom the researcher could rely for accuracy. During the review process, we took all the comments made into consideration.

The institutions that responded to the questionnaire are not identified in the paper. The researchers sent the questionnaire to many institutions, some of whom chose to answer while others did not. Any time a survey is administered, one takes on faith that the individuals who participate in such a survey would do so in good faith and with the intention of being honest and correct. Indeed, there is neither motive nor reward for making inaccurate or misleading statements. Our data regarding the institution criticized as having a large number of full-time and adjunct faculty members was verified, and subsequently found to be totally legitimate; at the present time, at that institution there are 22 full-time faculty and more than 40 adjuncts. Further, the program in question should in no way be characterized as a "recycled" chemistry or biology program. If the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* is interested, the researchers would gladly make available for review a copy of the raw data received electronically by each school.

The comment that it is impossible to have so many forensic scientists working in a single program compels us to conclude that Dr. Siegel has misinterpreted information in the paper. The authors

never stated that all of the faculty members were only forensic scientists. However, the question raised goes far deeper. What defines a forensic scientist? In my opinion, a person that is involved in or has published research pertinent to the forensic science field broadly defined, and/or teaches forensic-science-related courses is a practitioner working in the field, etc., and as such IS a forensic scientist. The assumption that a department cannot contain as many individuals as our research indicates is incorrect. For example, I was trained as a chemist. I am interested in stereochemical issues and have published papers in synthesis and supramolecular chemistry. However, since joining John Jay College, I apply my training in and knowledge of chemistry to answer forensic-related questions. Am I not a forensic scientist? According to Dr. Siegel's strict and confining definition, I am not. Indeed, I have published four papers in forensic-related journals in the last 4 years and have mentored four students who have graduated from a master's program in forensic science. The large majority of my colleagues have done the same. Are we not forensic scientists because we are also chemists, biologists, molecular biologists, sociologists, and the like?

Chemistry, biology, sociology, etc., are all aspects of forensic science, particularly in light of the more inclusive definition typically applied: that forensic science is the intersection of the sciences and law. This definition must account for the fact that I see many more forensic scientists than Dr. Siegel's limited definition would allow. Is it only individuals who have worked in law enforcement or related fields that qualify as forensic scientists. I do not believe so. Any individual that advances the forensic science field is functioning as a forensic scientist. As one proverb says, "[a]s you make your bed, so you must lie in it." I feel that it is not possible to try to develop the forensic science field without understanding that being a forensic scientist also includes being a chemist, a biologist, a sociologist, etc. Thankfully, the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* continues to publish papers NOT only from strictly defined forensic scientists, but also from chemists, biologists, etc., working in the field and who conduct research which advances the field of forensic science.

Finally, the authors acknowledge that it is indeed an "Academy" and not an "Association." We are surprised that neither the authors, the peer reviewers, etc., actually caught the error. Perhaps, that is because it is of such little consequence.

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