

Author's Response

Sir,

It is with great interest that I have read the letter of Fracasso et al. The German literature seems so interesting and rich; it is really unfortunate that a language barrier limits its access to the majority of the forensic sciences community.

The definition of the hat brim line in the German literature seems indeed more detailed than its form in the English literature. Obviously, the concept evolved differently in the English and the German literature.

In their letter, Fracasso et al. state that the following conditions must be fulfilled to meet the German definition of the hat brim line rule: knowing that the fall occurred from a standing position, knowing that the fall was from one's own height, knowing that the fall was on a flat surface, and knowing that there were no intermediate obstacles.

If in the autopsy suite, the forensic pathologist must already know all of the conditions outlined above to apply the German version of the hat brim line rule, then from an applied forensics point of view, I must say that I do not find that definition valuable.

The definition of the hat brim line rule used in our article was designed to be applied in the very common situation where the forensic pathologist has to distinguish whether injuries were sustained in a fall or from a blow to the head.

Forensic pathologists need a valid tool that can be used in the autopsy suite and is also acceptable in the court room. In that sense, the definition of the hat brim line rule as presented in our article seems to have better applied value in the practice of forensic pathology than the definition described in the letter of Fracasso et al.

Despite the difference of opinion, I have great admiration for the German forensic literature. On a regular basis, I found myself disappointed to have read an interesting abstract and not been able to consult the article in its entirety because of the language barrier.

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