



ASCLD FRC Lightning Talks

Cognitive Bias in Forensic Science

Thursday May 6th, 2021, 1:00 EST, WebEx

Register at: <https://www.ascld.org/forensic-research-committee/>



Cognitive Bias in Forensic Toxicology

Hilary Hamnett, Senior Lecturer, University of Lincoln, UK

This talk will focus on how cognitive bias can affect different stages of forensic toxicology casework. There are three key points in a case where bias can influence our decisions: 1) at the start of the case when we are choosing which drugs to look for; 2) when identifying a drug in a sample; and 3) when interpreting and reporting the results at the end of the case.



Understanding and Avoiding Cognitive Contamination in Forensic Decision-Making

Jeff Kukucka, Associate Professor, Towson University

Cognitive bias can affect even the most experienced and diligent professionals in any domain. In this talk, I will first briefly describe the various sources of "cognitive contamination" in forensic laboratories. Then, I will address forensic examiners' beliefs about cognitive bias and the best ways to combat it, including a worrisome disconnect between what some examiners believe is effective and what research suggests is effective.



Moving Beyond Bias: Cognitive 'Reflexes' in Forensic Science Decision-Making

Bethany Gowns, Postdoctoral Research Scholar, University of Exeter, UK

Human subjectivity is fundamentally implicated in the collection, analysis and interpretation of nearly all forensic evidence – leading to concerns about the 'biasability' of forensic science. Yet bias in the law is often seen as deliberate partisanship, whereas bias in psychology is often seen as a cognitive 'reflex' where human decision-making is impacted implicitly and unconsciously. Moving beyond framing these implicit psychological effects as bias will be critical for interdisciplinary communication and collaboration between law and the forensic and cognitive sciences.