The Need for Sequential Unmasking
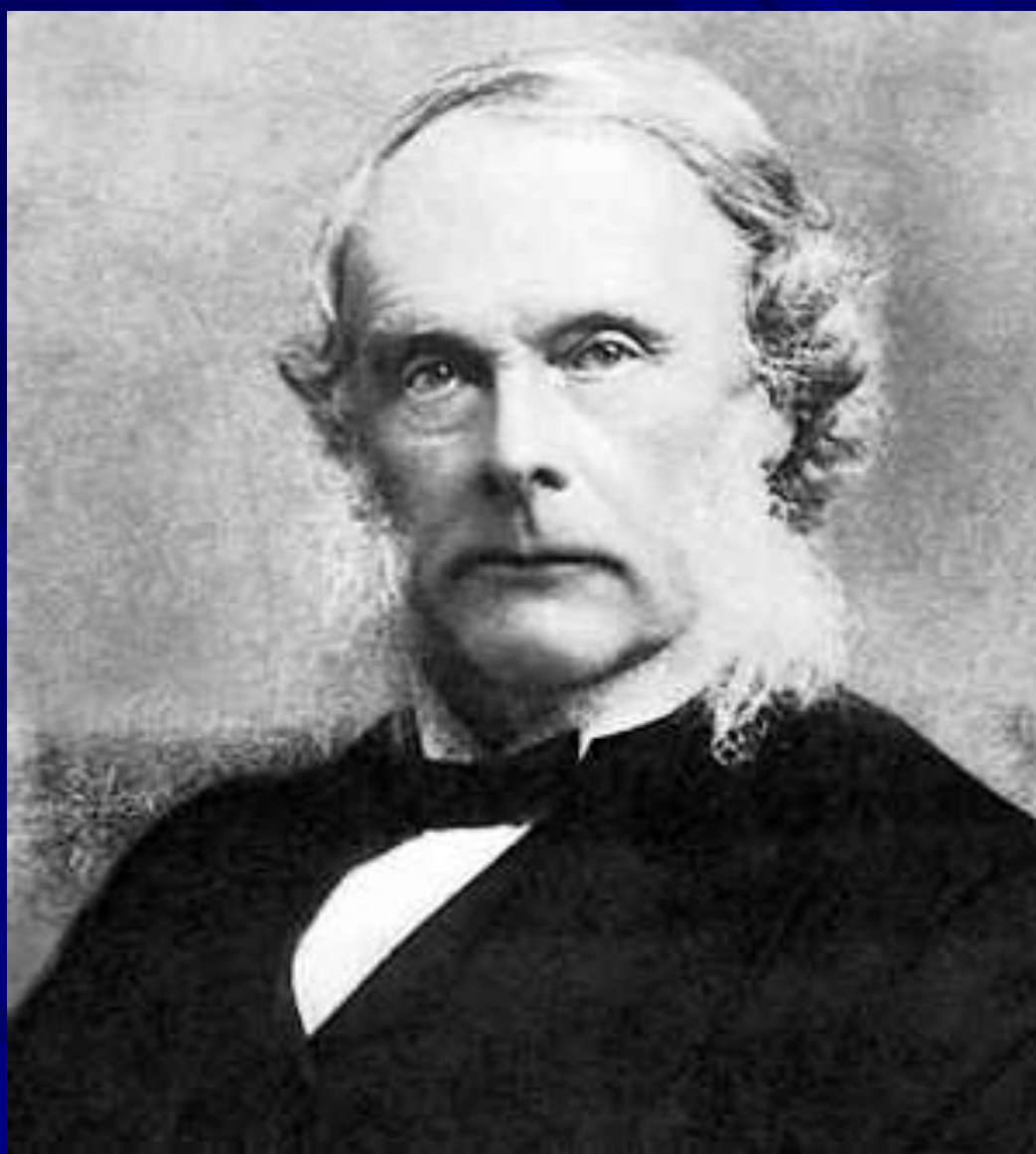
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Biasing information distorts results.

The more ambiguous the signal to be evaluated, the larger the distorting effect.

And the more that information engages emotions and desires, the stronger the distortion will be.

Information contamination is to be avoided by eliminating biasing information.

Sequential Unmasking

Each area of forensic expertise should define what is and is not "domain-relevant" and "domain-irrelevant" information.

Domain-irrelevant information must be filtered out so that the examiner doing the test procedure is "blind" to it.

Domain-relevant information must be made available in the least distorting order.

Sequential Unmasking

1. Masking is insulting.

2. Masking makes the job less interesting.

3. Masking might deprive the examiner of
    helpful information (Sherlock Holmes didn't work
blind).

4. Masking is unnecessary because we
    are professional, and there is insufficient
research to show a need for masking.

5. Masking is too expensive.

Joshua R. Kline & Aaron Roodman,

Blind Analysis in Nuclear and Particle Physics

55 Ann. Rev. of Nuc. and Particle Sci. 141 (2005)

Not disrespectful to propose a practice widely adopted in modern science, even physics!

Leonard Butt,

Problems, Perspectives , and Proposed Solutions—Commentary by a Forensic Examiner

2 J. App. Research in Memory & Cognition 59 (2013)

Training in professionalism and good intentions not to be influenced by biasing information don't help much.

Saul M. Kassin, Itiel E. Dror & Jeff Kukucka,

The Forensic Confirmation Bias: Problems, Perspectives and Proposed Solutions

2 J. App. Research in Memory & Cognition 42 (2013)

Sherry Nahkaeizadeh, Itiel Dror and Ruth Morgan,

Cognitive Bias in Forensic Anthropology: Visual Assessment of Skeletal Remains is Susceptible to Confirmation Bias

Science and Justice (in press)