



# NATIONAL COMMISSION ON FORENSIC SCIENCE



## Scientific Literature in Support of Forensic Science and Practice

---

### **Type of Work Product: Summary of Adjudication of Public Comments Received on the Views Document**

#### **Public Comment Summary:**

The NCFS Subcommittee on Scientific Inquiry and Research posted a Views document, “Scientific Literature in Support of Forensic Science and Practice” in October 2014. During the approximately 30-day public comment period, nine public comments were received, including a letter from the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiners (AFTE). This document summarizes the comments by theme and includes the subcommittee responses.

#### **Itemized Issues and Adjudication Summary:**

##### **Formatting Suggestion**

1. Commenter would like document control requirements be added, e.g. a footer that will assist in the referencing of documents: "issue date of the document, page number, total number of pages, and a document identifier [maybe a shortened title]".

“This is a minor comment, but it may help those of us who will review and reference these documents when they are published. Rather than repeat this for each draft document, is there any possibility of incorporating some type of footer on each page that will include: issue date of the document, page number, total number of pages, and a document identifier [maybe a shortened title]?”

These basic document control requirements for labs [forensic or otherwise] are stated in ISO/IEC 17025, clause 4.3.2.1. I hope they would be seen as a helpful addition to these important documents.”

*Response: This information was passed to the staff for consideration, as it would have an impact on all documents.*

##### **Editing Suggestions**

Page 1: In the first sentence in the first paragraph in the “Statement of Issue” section, the two appearances of “which” should be changed to “that.”

Page 1: In the first sentence in the third paragraph, add “there was,” so that the sentence reads: The results of this inquiry were described in the NRC report, specifically that *there was* “a notable dearth”

Page 2: In the first sentence in the last paragraph, the word “it” should be changed to “is,” so the sentence reads: Given this background and consideration, the position of the NCFS *is* that foundational...

*Response: These editorial changes were made.*

## **Comments on Content**

1. The commenter criticizes the authors for exclusively citing themselves in the document.

*Response: The NCFS is not the same entity as the cited sources, which are the National Research Council (NRC) and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).*

2. The commenter is in favor of the recommendation but asserts that some journals will not meet the standard of peer review and dissemination, such as publications by the International Association for Identification (IAI), Clandestine Laboratory Investigating Chemists (CLIC) and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), such as *Microgram Journals*.

*Response: The subcommittee is aware that the cited publications will not meet the criteria for foundational literature as set forth in the Views document. This is not meant to imply that these publications are not of value to the forensic community, only that articles published in these publications cannot be considered part of the foundational scientific literature. It is important that foundational literature be equally accessible by any interested party and indexed for searching.*

3. As to the “Scientific Literature Support of Forensic Science and Practice,” the IAI (along with several other forensic associations) regularly publishes peer-reviewed journals that reflect ongoing scientific research into several forensic disciplines represented by our organization. We sense, however, that the Commission doesn’t feel our association (and possibly others) adequately meets a standard as defined in this draft. We are further concerned that moving the publication of said journals to the private sector (e.g., Medline, Google Scholar, Xplore) puts the credibility of publications at some risk. Finally, we believe that indexing of journals is beyond the needs of the forensics community.

*Response: What is considered foundational literature in forensic science must be the same as what is considered foundational literature in any science. This does not mean that other journals are not of value to a given discipline. Publication of peer-reviewed articles by private sector publishers and journals is standard practice across scientific disciplines. The credibility of these publications is supported by the other considerations noted in the Views document to include peer review and clear editorial and conflict-of-interest policies. Indexing is essential to ensuring that publications are available to the widest possible audience including those outside of a given forensic discipline. Credibility arises from availability and transparency. Access affords the opportunity for work to be evaluated, tested, replicated, and built upon as judged by the wider scientific community.*

7. Letter from AFTE. This document is too long to reproduce here.

*Response: What is considered foundational literature in forensic science must be the same as what is considered foundational literature in any science. This does not mean that other journals are not of value to a given discipline. Conflict-of-interest policies are integral to the definition of foundational literature and goes beyond financial and business considerations.*

*Indexing is critical to ensure accessibility of scientific work to any and all interested parties, as this opens the work to review, replication, evaluation, testing, confirming extension , and application through the normal process of the scientific method.*