

2012-08-14

Response to: DR AS 5388.3 Forensic analysis - Part 3 - Interpretation

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Comment:

Interpretation is a very important part of a forensic report. I am therefore glad to see that standards are being drafted to improve the current situation. These standards are in the form of a guideline, which in my opinion is a good choice.

However, the current draft could in my opinion be improved substantially. The text is rather vague, so almost any current expert report will satisfy it. For example, when a firearms expert states that in his opinion, the bullets were probably fired by the same gun, this statement would satisfy these draft standards. However, modern evidence interpretation would require a different type of statement. Furthermore, it remains very unclear how the interpretation should be documented: which parts should be in the report, which in the case file (and at what level of detail). I am afraid that therefore this text will not lead to improvements in casework and in this respect is a missed opportunity.

There have been many developments in evidence interpretation over the past years, mainly in the likelihood ratio approach, but this text does not seem to reflect these. The draft text seems a listing of the various methods used currently, rather than a guideline which clearly promotes some methods and discourages the use of others.

Proposed change

The current literature strongly promotes the use of the likelihood ratio framework for evidence interpretation. I suggest the standards therefore also clearly promote this framework, in order to actually improve the interpretation in casework. It would be good to involve an expert knowledgeable in this field.

I attach the AFSP guidelines [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.scijus.2011.01.002>] as an example. I think they would be a good starting point.

Finally, I think it is useful to be more specific. For example: how should the interpretation part be documented?