

Forensic odontology in India



The importance of dental identification is on the increase year after year. This is due to increasing incidence of mass disasters because of natural phenomena such as cyclones, earthquakes, floods, and volcanic explosions as well as non-natural occurrences such as airplane accidents, industrial accidents, and terror acts. Apart from mass disasters, carnal and heinous acts culminating in homicide of victims particularly children are also common. In all these, it is the duty of the state to accomplish the social obligation of recovering, identifying, and giving the remains of the deceased to the relatives. It is also imperative to identify the cause and time of death for insurance claims, testament, business and commerce, marriage, and other situations that require legal designation of the death.

Forensic dentistry, from its earliest conception, is more or less an offshoot of forensic medicine, the dental surgeon being consulted only in cases where dental data and details are evident to them. With the passage of time, the role of dentistry has increased as very often teeth and dental restorations are the only means of identification, especially after tragic destructive disasters, accidents, and fires where facial configuration and fingerprints are entirely lost. Teeth, jaw bone, salivary remnants, elements from oral tissues and tissue fluids, presence of foreign bodies, sinus configuration, skull sutures, comparison possibilities from radiographs of small and specific sites of the jaws and teeth, model comparisons, dental chart comparisons, dental treatment comparison, and DNA analysis all provide an enormous

wealth of identification characteristics and knowledge. We also read about the use of these features in very many areas in the deliverance of justice as well as identification in disasters. Hence, this science is very valid and it must be given the impetus it greatly deserves for its development in India.

During the V National Conference conducted in January 2008 at Chennai it was observed and appreciated by the participants that most of the papers presented were not just review articles but included research done by the presenters and their team. These were on varied areas, which could independently provide valuable information or pave way for further research, which can provide significant knowledge. The response to the development of this science has encouraged us to initiate this *Journal of Forensic Odontology*, an official publication of the Indian Association of Forensic Odontology. The journal is aimed at fulfilling some of the educational objectives of the association.

So come join; let us share our findings.

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