

Task Number: 2012-039

Article Title: The Weight of Subjective Conclusions

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Article's Subject Matter:

- Preliminary consideration of the benefits/limitations of 3 types of statistical probabilities in the context of the question – Are forensic conclusions of value if they are not currently suitable to being represented mathematically?

Key Points in Article

- 3 types of statistical probabilities; classical, empirical and subjective.
- Classical – finite number of equally likely outcomes i.e. coin toss.
- Empirical – infinite possible outcomes or when the likelihood of outcomes unequal. Frequency of an event is estimated by observing a sample group.
- Subjective – consider knowledge not captured by mathematical equations.
- Preferred approach depends on the situation being assessed but concern of subjective probabilities is that they are susceptible to the examiner's intuition or gut feeling.
- Scientists trained to rely only on information that can be demonstrated to others.
- Value of forensic conclusions is in the 'soundness behind the conclusion' and in certain situations, subjective probability may give the most accurate representation of the information.

Fallacies and Issues

- More discussion on what is meant by 'soundness behind the conclusion' would be useful as subjective probability seems to have the same issues as subjective opinion i.e. based on personal beliefs, it simply sounds more scientific.