

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Commentary on: Dror IE, Melinek J, Arden JL, Kukucka J, Hawkins S, Carter J, et al. Cognitive bias in forensic pathology decisions. *J Forensic Sci.* <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.14697>. Epub 2021 Feb 20.

See Original Dror et al Article [here](#)

See JFS Editor-in-Chief Preface [here](#)

See Authors' Response to Graber Commentary on [here](#)

Editor,

In their study of a possible medical child-abuse case, researchers demonstrate how unintentional biases can contaminate decisions on the manner of death [1]. Focusing on medical child abuse is particularly appropriate, as there is widespread evidence of both under-diagnosis and over-diagnosis in these cases, both of which can have disastrous impact on the child, or the parents, respectively [2].

It is also very appropriate (and overdue) that they call attention to the powerful impact that bias can have on our diagnostic decisions more generally. We have known for decades that bias can lead to diagnostic errors in health care, as in every profession that depends on analytical thinking [3], and that overconfidence in the quality of our decision-making is similarly ubiquitous [4]. Why would forensic pathology be an exception?

Research studies like this should be welcomed by the field. First, the study highlights the need to improve our understanding of biased decision making in the forensic sciences. Further, the study offers important suggestions on how to mitigate the impact of bias, complementing suggestions that are emerging in healthcare diagnosis more generally [5].

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