

## 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 Duflou Commentary on [here](#)

Editor,

The study by Dror et al. [1] on cognitive bias among forensic pathologists highlights an important issue in forensic pathology practice. Many forensic pathologists have railed against this study on the basis of being labeled racist as a professional group, and on the grounds of poor study design, but a careful reading of the paper shows neither of these claims are made or are valid. Other forensic pathologists have expressed concern that this study will be used against them in court by defense practitioners—fair enough, but this paper does not show that all forensic pathologists have an overt racial bias, rather it shows that there is a potential for bias if care is not taken.

It is in the nature of the human condition that we all have biases to varying extents, many of which are the result of the cultures and environments we are brought up in and continue to live in. As indicated by Dror et al, if we are not mindful of such biases we are prone to dismissing the entire issue under the false belief and pretense that bias does not exist, and in those very circumstances there is the potential to be biased.

Although many negative comments have been made in relation to this study, these are largely unwarranted and not based on a detailed analysis of the material presented and conclusions drawn. The important take-home message of the paper is that as forensic practitioners who consider a large amount of information much of which is not specifically medical in nature, we need to acknowledge to ourselves that bias exists and that it is the very knowledge of its existence and our attempts to minimize its impact which will make us better and more impartial expert witnesses.

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## REFERENCE

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