



## Forensic Odontology

**Prateek Rastogi\***

*Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Kasturba Medical College, India*

Forensic odontology is an upcoming specialty, whose importance cannot be undermined in medicolegal cases especially in identification of unknown human remains, accused of sexual assault, age estimation, etc. Recently, attempts have been made all over the world to apply the knowledge of odontology to help the investigations. Identification is the core of forensic investigations in living as well as in the dead. Course of law can be decided only if all doubts related to identification are settled. Forensic aspect of Odontology deals with the uniqueness amongst teeth in an individual and plays a major role in identification especially in situations like air accidents, industrial mishaps and natural disasters where the bodies are damaged beyond identification. It can also identify the relation between accused and victim in crimes involving rape, murder, body injury and child abuse where bite marks and loose tooth are found at the place of incidence. Teeth are hardest structures in the body. They are heat, microbial and acid resistant and once fully formed and erupted will remain as it is without change. These features are helpful in personal identification especially in decomposed, fragmented, mutilated, charred and skeletonized remains. Even the restorations and dentures also have high durability; the combination of restored, non-restored, absent and temporary teeth can be exceptional

as a fingerprint, as it is very unlikely for two dentitions to be completely equal. In addition, to morphological features studies have also been conducted on Odontometrics i.e. dental measurements. These measurements like intercanine distance, incisor width, canine index, premolar index, molar index, canine width, premolar arch width, molar arch width etc, have proved to be individualistic in combination. They can help not only in identification but also in gender determination of a person. Dentition can also help to identify the race, occupation and social status of the person. Thus, Forensic odontology hides within itself an immense potential for complete identification in living as well as in dead. In spite of being a great speciality, in majority of countries it is mainly considered an academic branch where experts mostly busy with teaching and research and barring few countries, they are called for help only depending on discretion of main investigator which is mainly the police. I personally feel that this attitude should change and legal authorities should employ the services of forensic odontologists on a regular and permanent basis for speedy and genuine delivery of justice.

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**\*Corresponding author:** Prateek Rastogi, Associate Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Kasturba Medical College, India, Tel: 0824-2422271; E-mail: [rastogiprateek@rediffmail.com](mailto:rastogiprateek@rediffmail.com)

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