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Bolstering Forensic Science Through Extended Knowledge Sharing by Dr Georgina Sauzier, Curtin University, Dr Mubarak Bidmos, Qatar University, and Dr Graeme Horsman, Teesside University

Forensic science plays a significant role in, and impacts upon, criminal justice systems worldwide. As criminal activity evolves, we face an increasing number of complex incidents requiring thorough, reliable investigation using contemporary techniques and knowledge. All of this comes at a time when the forensic sciences are facing greater scrutiny than ever before, with recent concerns raised in the United Kingdom by the Forensic Science Regulator and similarly in the United States by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

Amongst the current challenges facing forensic science are the need for scientifically rigorous validation of methods; the development and reliability assessment of operational standards; and the sharing of data between jurisdictions. These challenges are further compounded by the ever-increasing rate at which new methodological developments are emerging. To overcome these hurdles, platforms must be established to provide open and transparent access to content that creates, evaluates and further develops forensic knowledge. Herein lies an additional challenge. Publication favours the novel; often seeking "innovative", "cutting-edge" research or "fundamental advancements" in the field. The result is a lost opportunity to share more incremental contributions, which may nonetheless be of strong relevance to forensic practitioners, managers and stakeholders, due to a perceived lack of citability.

Case reports are one such example of where this marginalisation, however unintended, is apparent. Whilst several mainstream forensic journals accept case report submissions, publication is often limited to those containing rare or unusual characteristics that are deemed to hold significant academic interest. Consequently, the overall publication rate is disproportionately low, particularly for cases reported from developing countries, or those outside of the anthropology, pathology, and toxicology fields. Providing an avenue to share these short (yet valuable) contributions is a crucial next step to strengthening forensic science as a whole. Furthermore, published content that consolidates and validates existing knowledge through documented testing and peer review serves as a valuable benchmark standard for 'good practice'.

The latest addition to the Forensic Science International family, *Reports*, is a gold Open Access journal that seeks to foster information and knowledge exchange across the forensic sciences. The journal welcomes short communications and data articles reporting original and methodologically sound results, including but not limited to case or digital reports, population data, commentaries or critical reviews, practitioner notes, and artefact forensic reporting. By publishing articles that are free to access and distribute in perpetuity, we aim to promote transparent, analytical discourse within (and between) the global forensic and legal communities. As forensic quality management necessitates research into reliability and measures of performance, the journal also encourages the reporting of negative results and validation studies.

The continued advancement of forensic science hinges upon rigorous testing of methods, ethical integrity in reporting, and equity across the boundaries of discipline or geography. Our aim is to rapidly disseminate quality reports whilst adhering to these principles, which we strongly believe are paramount to forensic science and its role in criminal justice. We are excited to bring this vision to the forensic community, and look forward to sharing this exciting new adventure.