



September 7, 2016

On September 1, 2016, a teleconference was held to announce the completion of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) report and to hear the committee vote on its release.

The PCAST position was critical about the use of bite-marks, firearms and tool-marks, complex DNA mixtures, and footwear examination. They indicated that each lack scientific foundational support and should not be permitted for use in the criminal courtroom.

The IAI was able to review a draft of the report. The opinions expressed by PCAST in that version disregard large bodies of scientific evidence, demonstrate a lack of understanding of the discipline of footwear evidence examination and include statements that appear biased and that are not supported by the facts and/or research. The process included minimal effort to involve the practitioner community in the process.

Footwear Evidence is a discipline that is represented by the IAI. Until the official report is released, the IAI is not able to comment on specific criticisms that may be in the report. The IAI stands by the reliability of footwear evidence examination when it is conducted according to accepted standards and by examiners with sufficient training and experience such as those recommended by the IAI Recommended Course of Study for Footwear and Tire Track Examiners. The IAI stands prepared to provide resources and information to support this position on Footwear Evidence Examination.

It is the general and constant position of the IAI that critical evaluation of the practice of forensic evidence is welcome. Scrutiny by stakeholders, academics, peers and others are important processes to continue to develop the reliability of evidence that is utilized in the criminal justice system. However, for an evaluation process to result in movement forward it must be fair and impartial, and must be conducted in a manner that includes sufficient knowledge of the discipline to be evaluated and must consider and include all the current research. This recent effort by the PCAST committee falls short of these expectations.

Harold Ruslander,  
President