

Guideline

Subject: **Medical Review of Clinical Forensic Medical Reports**
Approval Date: January 2021
Review Date: January 2025
Review By: Faculty of Clinical Forensic Medicine Committee
Number: 2/2021

Purpose

Medical review of clinical forensic medical reports is an important opportunity for an author of a report to seek and receive feedback as a quality assurance activity.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with:

- Australian Standard® *Forensic analysis Part 4: Reporting*;
- RCPA Guideline 5/2014 [Provisions of Second Opinions in Forensic Pathology](#); and
- Any jurisdiction-specific codes of conduct for expert witnesses.

State or territory and employer policies will also apply

Definition of a Clinical Forensic Medical Report

For the purpose of this guideline, a Clinical Forensic Medical Report (CFMR) is a document that has been written for the purpose of providing medical evidence to the court. They can otherwise be referred to as: Medicolegal Reports, Expert Opinions, Forensic Medical Expert Reports, Expert Certificates or Statements.

Guidelines

- It is best practice for all CFMR to be reviewed as a quality assurance process.
- All clinical forensic medical workplaces should have policy and procedures in place for the review of CFMR.
- The report review should be conducted by an examiner with both relevant clinical expertise and experience as a reviewer. A suitable reviewer is likely to be recognised as a specialist, and/or have a Masters in Forensic Medicine (or equivalent), and have a reasonable amount of experience presenting medical evidence in court.
- The reviewer should consider also reviewing source material (especially photographs, body diagrams, etc) that relate to the CFMR.
- The report review process should be documented, and clear feedback should be provided to the author.
- Ultimate responsibility for the content of the report lies with the author and signatory of the report.
- Where there is a significant difference of opinion between an author and a reviewer and this cannot be resolved, the opinion of a second reviewer with relevant expertise should be sought.

- The review should take place prior to finalising and signing the report. Only finalised and signed reports should be released to the criminal justice system.
- If the reviewer has ongoing concerns regarding the contents of a forensic medical report, or its release to the criminal justice system, then they should discuss their options for intervention with management, legal counsel or a senior clinical forensic physician.