

Forensic Reports and Testimony: A Guide to Effective Communication for Psychologists and Psychiatrists

By Randy K. Otto, Richard L. DeMier, and Marcus T. Boccaccini. Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014. 400 pp. \$70 hardcover, \$56.99 e-book.

In *Forensic Reports & Testimony: A Guide to Effective Communication for Psychologists and Psychiatrists*, three psychologists have produced a book on practical forensic psychology and psychiatry that is worthy of attention. Drs. Otto, DeMier, and Boccaccini have leveraged their impressive experience as practitioners and teachers, offering readers at all levels insight on how to communicate with attorneys and courts. Appreciating a need for their message to be distinct, the authors clearly state their goal of integrating report writing and testimony by focusing on the trajectory of getting one's point across to the intended audience. Their approach makes perfect sense, since communication wrapped in psychobabble may be doomed.

The book has three main sections: reports and other written work, testimony, and sample reports. Appendices containing work product samples take up one-third of the book. The first-person point of view supports the impression that the authors sincerely care about improving the quality of our work. Throughout the chapters and samples are numerous call-out boxes and other educational aids. Some readers may find them a distraction, but they are on point and illustrative of the main text. Unique to this book is an emphasis on research regarding forensic practice. Other teaching points range from word choice in reports to the differences between facts, inferences, and opinions.

As Thomas Grisso observes in his foreword, the varied content of this book lends itself to adopting its advice a bit at a time. The authors have packed into this volume a wealth of common sense and technical knowledge. I was delighted to find many instances of small matters that tend to escape the curriculum. For example, the sample reports contain virtual sticky notes that call attention to why the writer included or omitted certain language or level of detail. At all times, the authors are focused on how to refine written work, approaches to legal professionals, preparedness for defending one's opinions, and the research that supports forensic information.

This book has a somewhat different focus from that of Buchanan and Norko's *The Psychiatric Report*,¹ in that it provides more detail on how to write, which would be helpful to the early-career practitioner. For training programs, it should be on the shelf with *Handbook of Forensic Assessment*,² which also resonates with forensic psychologists and psychiatrists in practice. *Forensic Reports and Testimony* provides a nice balance among the topics of report writing, testimony, and the science behind psychological findings. The authors are careful to counsel practitioners not to overreach in their opinions and not to stray beyond the referral question. Their use of illustrative anecdotes and sample court colloquies add vibrancy to the text. Though the book is best suited to the practitioner on the learning curve, clinicians at all levels would benefit from its sound counsel.

References

1. Buchanan A, Norko MA: *The Psychiatric Report: Principles and Practice of Forensic Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011
2. Drogin EY, Dattilio FM, Sadoff RL, *et al*: *Handbook of Forensic Assessment: Psychological and Psychiatric Perspectives*. Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons, 2011

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Psychiatric Expert Testimony: Emerging Applications

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Are we there yet? From functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) lie detectors to positron emission tomographic (PET) scans to substantiate brain damage in a competence-to-stand-trial hearing, we are entering a new era of the use of neuroscience in courts. Much remains to be learned about the appropriate use and limitations of these technologies. *Psychiatric Expert Testimony: Emerging Applications* is a scholarly look at new topics, technologies, and techniques in forensic psychiatric assessments and testimony. It serves as both a reference and a starting point for forensic psychiatrists interested in learning more about these rapidly developing areas. It covers new technologies, such as fMRI lie