



Year V, v.2 2025 | Submission: 11/15/2025 | Accepted: 11/17/2025 | Publication: 11/19/2025

## The importance of forensic dentistry in the identification of human beings.

*The importance of forensic dentistry in Human identification*

Pamela Gaeta - Patos de Minas College

Elisabete Aparecida Rosário de Sousa

### SUMMARY

With the increase in accidents, both man-made and those caused by natural disasters, new identification methodologies have been found, among them Forensic Dentistry, which refers to a simple procedure, presenting a reduced cost and reliable results. Thus, the present study aimed to emphasize how forensic dentistry is applied in human identification in forensic scenarios through a literature review on the legal aspect of this practice and its importance in investigations related to human identification, highlighting the main techniques performed by professionals in this area. The research was obtained from the following databases: PubMed, Lilacs, Scielo, Google Scholar, and the Brazilian Journal of Forensic Dentistry (RBOL). The studies showed how important dentistry is in the forensic sector in the identification of bodies, or possible criminal situations such as assaults. It is concluded that dentists and dentistry are linked to the forensic/legal field, where they serve to meet the demand that constitutes the only means of human identification, through the use of the dental arch, whether morphological or comparative.

**Keywords:** Human Identification. Forensic/Legal Dentistry. Dental Arch Identification. Forms of Human Identification.

### ABSTRACT

With the increase in the occurrences of accidents, both man-made and those occurring due to natural disasters, new identification methodologies were found, among which is Forensic Dentistry, which alludes to a simple application procedure, presenting a reduced cost and safe results. Thus, the present study aimed to emphasize how the application of forensic dentistry is carried out in human identification in forensic scenarios, by means of a literature review on the legal aspects of this practice and its importance in investigations related to human identification, pointing out the main techniques performed by professionals in this area. The research was carried out in the following databases: PubMed, Lilacs, Scielo, Google Scholar, and the Brazilian Journal of Legal Dentistry (RBOL). The studies showed how important dentistry is in the forensic sector for the identification of bodies, or possible criminal situations such as assaults. It is concluded that the dental surgeon and dentistry are linked to the forensic/legal area, where they present themselves to meet the demand that constitutes the sole means of human identification, using the dental arch, whether morphological and/or comparative.

**Keywords:** Human Identification. Forensic/Legal. Dentistry. Arch Identification. Forms of Human Identification.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings are consistently subjected to potential physical harm, which

It can happen due to natural and even artificial factors, and often...

They can result in death. The severity of the injuries may necessitate the identification procedure of the mortal remains, and it is within this context that the Dental Surgeon (DS), that is, the forensic odontologist, holds a fundamental role in forensic medicine. This sector specializes in using methods suitable for assisting in the identification of individuals (CAMPOS, *et al.*, 2023).



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Dentistry plays a fundamental role when it comes to human identification.

especially in circumstances where other procedures prove unlikely or impractical. This arrangement in dentistry incorporates both technical and scientific information from the field of dentistry in legal precept, being widely used in investigations of criminals, as in the occurrence of unfortunate and regrettable events, as well as in natural disasters. (Souza; Antunes, 2023), which require investigations of highly complex physical injuries and in the analysis of dental episodes, which demand meticulous study with ethical attitudes and Professional integrity (Dos Santos Celestino 2023).

The unique characteristics of each individual's dental arch, combined with the resistance that it contains the tissues of the teeth even if they are in a state of extreme degradation. confirms the dental diagnosis, thus being a fundamental resource for the recognition of the identity of the person in question, even after death (De Santana et al., 2024)

Technological procedures used today include: medical records, X-rays. and models are widely used to compare dental peculiarities with subsidies. Pre-registered information for victims who have been in accidents and need to be identified. (Andrade et al., 2023). When fires occur and the bodies become charred, making it difficult to... Identification is limited to the bones or, in the case of decomposing corpses, the teeth. They commonly remain as the physical structure that makes it possible to identify sufficient for the Identification. This skill is primarily derived from resisting risks, especially those related to enamel dental, which is considered to be the hardest texture in the human body (Souza; Antunes, 2023; Emam, 2024).

The importance of dentistry becomes even greater in disasters with a high number of victims. It is usually a large number, where having quick knowledge of the injured is crucial to reducing the risk. The distress of the family and to collaborate in the investigations. Dentistry, by aligning science with the Justice is an essential component in resolving complicated episodes, contributing to... To safeguard the dignity of the victims and provide relief for their families.

Given this situation, the forensic dentist plays an indispensable role alongside the overall scenario. forensic criminal defense attorney, in which he/she is competent to carry out a thorough study of a dental arch, as well as other cranial areas, seeking the greatest amount of knowledge regarding this, contributing to the necessary identification and resolution of the episode. (Barbosa, Dos Santos and Leal *et al.*, 2022)

Thus, the question that underlies this study is: "How can Dentistry..." "To assist in legal procedures?" The main objective of this study is to discover What is the value and different applications of dental identification in human cases? expertise, exploring the application of the comparative principle between dental data before and after



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death as the primary identification procedure in cases of deceased individuals found in high deterioration

### **1.2 Delimitation of the Topic**

The main objective of this study is to discover the value and the different Advantages of dental intervention in human identification in forensic cases. Exploring the application of the comparative principle between dental data before and after death.

### **1.3 Justification**

The interest in addressing this topic arose from observing the numerous cases that marked the The importance of dentistry in identifying decomposing human remains, highlighting the legal aspect of this practice used to identify victims in situations such as disasters, accidents and Crimes. Oncological documentation represents a safe and effective method of identification. even in scenarios of extreme adversity.

### **1.4 Research Problem**

What are the advantages, limitations, and ideal conditions for using X-rays?  
Can dental records be used as a tool for human identification in a forensic context?

### **1.5 Hypothesis**

Dental documentation is a reliable and trustworthy method for identifying... human deceased, especially when combined with appropriate clinical records. documented and the use of digital technologies.

### **1.6 OBJECTIVES**

**1.6.1 General Objective: To emphasize how the application of dental records is carried out in Human identification in forensic settings when it occurs post-mortem.**

#### **1.6.2 Specific Objectives:**

- Evaluate the advantages and limitations of dental documentation,
- To investigate the impact of digital technologies;
- To verify the importance of dental documentation;

### **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

This study is a literature review regarding the value of Legal or forensic dentistry for the purpose of identifying human beings in disasters or in catastrophes. The methodology followed consisted of a bibliographic research using



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and scientific subjects, published in the databases, Google Scholar, PubMed, SciELO,

preferably those that were published between 2018 and 2024. For the realization of

For this study, publications in Portuguese were selected using the following keywords:

"Legal Dentistry," "Human Identification," and "Disasters," "Forensic Dentistry." These were...

books, monographs, theses and dissertations were also consulted in order to obtain information that would provide a better foundation for the research.

## **2. Forensic Dentistry and its Importance in Identifying...**

### **BODIES**

Forensic Dentistry deals with the application of specific methodologies.

appropriate for cooperating in identifying the biological profile of an unknown body: assessment age, gender determination, cultural and genetic characteristics that define an ethnic group, *ante mortem* (AM) and *post mortem* (PM) of a subject, versed as forensic anthropology (Trevisol *et al.*, 2021).

The dental surgeon (CD) when acting as a forensic odontologist becomes a A qualified professional in carrying out expert assessments, which can be performed in the civil field. Labor and criminal matters always depend on the administrative headquarters, according to Law No. 5.081/66. (Da Cruz Andrade, *et al.*, 2021). The dentist, whatever their specialty, has a performance important in the withholding procedure is what encompasses the due subsidies related to patient, since this proper filing can be used for future identifications of a practical nature, that is, information in the assertive verification of victims (Gioster-Ramos, *et al.*, 2021).

Dentistry, in its legal aspect, is a particular aspect of the practice of medicine. Legal, which deals with the study of the neck and head, being a function of the forensic dentist. not only in people who are fully active but also in the deceased, whose recognition depends on analysis of fragments of corpses or skeletal remains that require dental work, as well such as dental components, whether they are separated, in debris, or have been damaged. The use of techniques and new technologies as a means of identification. The dentist can collaborate. In crime cases, when it is necessary to identify victims, acting as an expert. contributing to justice, since dental examinations constitute a fairly standard procedure. employed considering that the oral route is valuable and, in addition to rudimentary teeth, can also Other parts of the mouth and oral tract should be investigated (Barros, 2016).

When it is not possible to identify whose remains they are through DNA testing or visually, because they are already decomposed or charred, or because they have been victims of aggression.



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or environmental disasters, the need arises to identify the bodies and the reasons that caused them.

Death, through the use of one's identity, by uncovering one's particularities. In this context

Forensic dentistry is indispensable for the effective confrontation of dental constitution, through

of odontograms, which are a special graphic caricature of the patient's mouth, dental record,

analysis of the palate, dental prostheses, and various records obtained ante mortem, making it necessary that the

visits to the dentist have been constant (Borges et al., 2018)

For an expert opinion to be valid, it is important that appropriate conditions are used.

such as: that the teeth have remained intact, practicality, permanence, immutability,

Uniqueness or individuality and classifiability, which consists of the organization of records. (Silva

et al., 2020). Thus, the identification of a body through forensic dentistry is completed after being

The comparative process was carried out to properly verify the positive characteristics of the *ante*.

*mortem* and *post mortem* before the records and other information held by the CD (Souza and Antunes,

2023).

## 2.1 Areas of practice in forensic dentistry

**With the modernization and use of technological processes, forensic dentistry is organized into...**

**three areas:**

- In the analysis of lesions in the jawbones, oral tissue, and teeth, identifying any changes resulting from extrinsic factors.
- in the analysis of bite marks to confirm or rule out a possible suspect of assault
- In the analysis of dental structures or fragments, to give just two examples of purposes in this area: cadaveric identification and another situation where the weapon of the crime was the teeth.

In forensic dentistry, the profession of dental surgeons is integrated alongside professionals in the judicial field so that the proposed objectives can be achieved. It is essential.

The exchange of rhetoric between them thus establishes legal/forensic dentistry as essential.

The work of the forensic dentist to act efficiently within the justice system. (Costa, et al.,). The author

It also mentions that in the initial phase, identification seeks to ascertain the reasons for death and the need for...

Request the dental records. In the second stage, request the post-mortem examination; at this stage, the following is done...

Analysis of the deceased's dental arch, using facial and oral radiographs.

(Costa, et al.,)

Using advanced software and magnetic resonance imaging, forensic dentists

They more easily demonstrate the reconstruction of facial tissues through 3D superimposition.

with the aid of a scanner, which is also used in the case of photographs for identification, including

still using computed tomography (CT) scans and magnetic resonance imaging to uncover causes for

Determining the causes of death through minimally invasive analysis allows for further investigation.



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of fragmented bones, signs of subcutaneous emphysema caused by trauma, hemorrhage, effects  
Injuries caused by violence, and brain injuries. (Silva, et al. 2021)

To work in this field, it is important that professionals have extensive knowledge.  
related to the incision, considering that problems may arise in accessing the dental arch,  
Often encountered, such as during visualization for examination, the cut becomes an alternative. The  
The forensic dentist needs to document the conditions observed at the beginning and the methodology indicated for the...  
execution (CURI et al., 2019)

### **3 Possible Difficulties That Arise for the Forensic Dentist**

During human identification activities using dental records,  
Some difficulties may arise, such as the destruction of rudimentary teeth, or the absence or imperfection of teeth.  
Recording of dental documents ante mortem. To efficiently achieve identification.  
Certain formalities are necessary, such as the type of disaster, the origin of the victims, and the knowledge...  
of dental therapy, as well as the existence of adequate dental records.  
dental problems achieved before death and dental issues after death. These difficulties may be  
divided into physics, which involves the perception of conduct and vitality, and cultural ethnology, which includes the  
disparity in human culture, between different modern groups and even those that no longer exist,  
considering the peculiar quantitative and qualitative modifications of the human being (SILVA et al.,  
2020)

The **palatoscopy** procedure allows for the analysis of tissue problems.  
such as deformities caused by progressive degeneration or deterioration, bone lesions, and scars.  
less intense, commonly caused by external factors, related to difficulties of a certain nature.  
Techniques such as insecurity among those who analyze them, and inadequate techniques for observing wrinkles.  
Palatal defects and plaster cast leaks are factors that make identifying the victim difficult.  
(Neves et al., 2021). There are also other causes that generate problems when performing the exam,  
of the dental arches, when it does not concern the case of skeletal remains and direct vision, since in  
It is not possible to say the same for bodies with soft textures; in this case, it is determined through cuts.  
directly or with assistance, allowing for the removal of the jaws in order to perform the evaluation.  
externally, according to the indigence of the analysis (Curi et al., 2019).

#### **3.1 Main forms of identification**

##### **3.1.1 Identification by means of the dental arch**

It consists of analyzing the peculiarities of the teeth, such as the absence of one or more teeth.  
Positions, restorations made with amalgam or composite resin, cavities, and various others.



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information that can contribute to identification, given its characteristics

They are entirely individual, because no two individuals have identical dental arches.

(Borges et al., 2018)

The morphological characteristics presented in human teeth, unlike all others.

the types of animals, being formed by the root and the crown with a segment, different from all the

other beings that exist, which have a cervical contour with a pronounced curve.

towards the root, although only the decisive teeth of monkeys can be revealed to be similar. The teeth

They are distinguished by being the most immutable organs in the human body, capable of withstanding even high levels of stress.

temperatures. Therefore, in order to analyze and research such particularities of teeth, it is essential to have

information regarding the composition of each tooth, initially determining if the component

Whether the dental implant is permanent or temporary, determine if it is located between the molars, incisors, premolars, or canines.

Which position and arc corresponds? When it comes to expertise, the abnormalities that appear...

In teeth, it is widely valid for particularization, as is the reduced quantity.

of teeth (Silva et al., 2020).

### **3.1.2 DNA Identification**

This procedure is considered reliable, even though it is not collected and compared,

Depending on the state of decomposition of the body, this methodology is selected when there is no other option.

fingerprints, the possibility of being performed using dental arches, and body measurements.

These methods are not viable. DNA testing shows good results, being able to identify the cause through a fragment of...

tissue. One of the most commonly used organic materials in DNA testing is the substance

dental, because tooth enamel consists of the thickest tissue in the body, and thus the teeth and

Dental structures always remain, in conditions after death that cause damage to others.

tissues (BORGES et al., 2018)

### **3.1.3 Identification by palatal rugoscopy**

Palatal rugoscopy is an analysis performed on the folds found in the mucosa of the

The palate, which is unique to each individual, just like fingerprints.

through accurate molding and photos of the palate, a comparison is made with the

specimens of the subjects to prove the corpse, lacking verification, considered in form,

quantity, size and arrangement (Debortoli et al., 2019).

In the forensic method, palatal rugae must be compared with dental records.

precedents, such as dental models or even radiographs, to ratify the identity of

person. Moreover, they can represent an important attachment when other modes of

If identification methods are insufficient or nonexistent, as can occur in natural disasters,



large-scale accidents or in criminal investigations (Da Paixão Argollo *et al.*, 2017).

### 3.1.4 Identification by cheiloscopy

It deals with the fingerprint found on the vermilion border of the lips through the marks left behind by itself. There are small wrinkles that cover this body composition, known as structures. These individuals are special due to genetic reasons, therefore the analysis needs to be meticulous and carried out with caution. professional consisting of various types, shapes, and numbers of grooves in that location. divided in the lip region, having a dominant type of groove originating from a special layer. (Fernandes *et al.*, 2016;).

Just like fingerprints, the peculiarities of the lips are unique to each individual. Each person's unique characteristics are unique and do not reproduce. Therefore, lip prints also constitute a unique identity. Fundamental tools in identifying people. They reveal particularities of internal or external organization of a body or tissue found in the labial sulci, which may be. They are evaluated through classification processes, which makes them indispensable in forensic dentistry. (Ata-Ali and Ata-Ali, 2014).

### 3.1.5 Identification by photograph

It is most commonly used in situations where there is no ante-mortem dental record. family members or personal belongings for genetic testing, as is the case with undocumented immigrants. and friends only have photographs and videos related to the submerged body, for this reason the Identifying victims has become increasingly important, especially when considering the... Identification of diseases, treatment, also including specific characteristics of teeth. such as crown configuration, size, width, dental abnormalities, arrangement, gaps between the teeth and facial features, clearly showing the preceding teeth in the image. before death, the identification of the person's characteristics after death, when compared, what provides satisfactory highlights for identifying individuality. There are three forms of analysis that The following methods are adopted for this type of check: Comparative analysis of dental morphology, overlap, incisal edge assessment (SILVA *et al.*, 2019).

In legal arguments, photographs play a crucial role as sensitive evidence. providing an indisputable visual demonstration of past events. In situations of In cases of offense before a court, a photograph is often the only objective evidence available, a copy. Without any bias or subjective explanation. His willingness to protect the crime scene, the damage... Physical evidence or occurrences is precious, allowing justice to be served long after the fact. The event has taken place. Therefore, photography is not merely a recording procedure, But it is also a silent yet powerful confirmation of a historical event.



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human, shaping our understanding of the past and also shaping the future (Campos *et al.*, 2023).

### 3.1.6 Identification through bite marks

In the process of identifying a human being, there are situations that demand precision. from the assessment through the sign left by bites, that is, lesions caused by teeth that They can be from humans or animals, and are recorded on the skin, in food, or even in... surfaces, which express the work of the dental arches (of the mandible and maxilla) analyzed confirmation of crimes of assault, confusion, murder, and sexual offenses, providing replicas of how the violence occurred and the time period between the event and the examination. Furthermore, it is clear whether the event occurred in a living being or a deceased person, making it possible to identify also the number of bites (Villalobos *et al.*, 2020).

It is clear from the above that legal/forensic dentistry fulfills an essential function in Identity verification, even in difficult situations such as advanced cases. decomposition. This area of forensic/legal science deals with distinguishing individuals or artifacts through the inspection of dental structures, through the checking of records prepared before Forensic odontologists may encounter significant challenges due to a lack of examinations. background information, or when that information is not up to date.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Viana *et al.* (2020) comment that a person's identity is entirely linked to Human decorum, and this means that every person has the right to recognition and a funeral dignified. Even after death, ensuring the identification of a subject is fundamental for to offer families and society a sense of emotional closure through fulfilling the fundamental rights of the deceased.

Within one context or another, it cannot be denied that forensic dentistry plays a role. Essential in the forensic identification process of victims. Dental radiology, provided to Expert methods facilitate the identification of individuals through comparative analyses. Performed between data before and after death, making it one of the fastest methods. and effective for recognizing unfamiliar people.

These methods When used together, they provide a versatile analysis and versatile, thus enabling better human identification, ensuring that even if there is adverse circumstances may lead to the accurate determination of the identity of individuals. thus playing a fundamental role in criminal justice and in the support of victims. (Barbosa, Dos Santos and Leal, 2022). However, each technique to be used has its limitations.



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and challenges, which, according to Nadal *et al.* (2015), the examination of the signs of a bite, for example, Although effective, there are several cases where it has been criticized for its interpretation.

According to Garbin *et al.* (2017), when comparing with dental records previously recorded images, such as dental models or even radiographs, show the wrinkles of The palatine bones contribute to confirming a person's identity. This property causes the... Rugoscopy is a valuable tool in criminal investigations and in identifying... victims, being seen as an efficient integral technique when various identification techniques, Fingerprints or DNA are not available or do not lead to a conclusion. (From Paixão Argollo *et al.*, 2017).

It is recommended that all dental radiographs of patients be properly archived, as they can be very useful for identification purposes. Despite the advances With technological advancements and the popularization of modern methods, such as DNA analysis, it is crucial not to... underestimating the importance of well-organized medical records or ignoring individual characteristics obtained in dental offices. In this way, forensic dentistry assumes a crucial role. in the identification processes, reinforcing the need for the participation of the forensic odontologist in the team. of forensic medical expertise. This professional contributes with detailed and clarifying information, assisting the justice system in an efficient manner.

In agreement, Gioster-Ramos *et al.* (2021) state that the signs left by Bites are widely distinguished in forensic dentistry. Every person has a set of teeth. Individualized, that is, unique, which makes bite marks an instrument with wide... potential for identifying suspects in criminal investigations. However, the analysis Detecting these signs can be delicate and challenging, as several factors, such as skin malleability, The thickness of the bite and tissue deterioration can compromise its accuracy.

According to the aforementioned authors, they also evaluate saliva as being a A respectable opening to a person's holistic situation, potentially representing a rich source. Information for medical diagnoses and forensic inquiries.

Campos *et al.* (2023) reinforce the view that photography, as a "witness" "Silent" accurately preserves crime scenes and can be categorical for judgment, of This is especially true when the evidence is unique and materially available. With the advancement of technology, Even common devices, such as smartphones, currently play an essential role in to capture high-quality images that can be used in forensic investigations. This It democratized access to photography, making it an instrument for safeguarding memories and Records of significant events regarding the verification of AM (ante-mortem) and PM (post-mortem). (mortem).



## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Forensic dentistry plays a fundamental role in the identification of individuals after death, especially when the bodies are already in an advanced state of decomposition. This sector requires meticulous strategies to contribute to its identification. It is necessary. Several procedures are employed in forensic dentistry, including the use of... of framed plaster specimens, reflection on the processes performed on the teeth, Review of medical records, not only dental but also medical, preferably the most recent ones. contemporary media, whether physical or digital, includes images such as X-rays and photographs. These Combined procedures offer consistent information for the validation principle. efficient and concise of individuals. (Warney et al., 2023)

The records contained in dental information files are useful and important. serving as a basis as a bibliography for both legal and clinical purposes, contributing to identifications, in a way that allows for comparisons and concrete processes that remain in the teeth, as well as its suitability, so that it can be beneficial and cooperate with the investigating the victims offers a greater chance of success in properly identifying them.

Thus, within forensic science, dentistry contributes effectively to the justice system. Identification of human beings through dental records, both of human remains and in cases of crime. and accidents, since dental rudiments have unique characteristics and durability. Its high quality makes it an essential and reliable material in identification processes. offering different techniques to achieve a real and effective result, which makes the presence of a an important forensic odontologist on the legal expertise team.

With technological advancements, obtaining information has become even simpler. necessary both before and after death regarding the victims, varied projections. , as This is the case with photography, which presents itself as one of the techniques that highlights the different... personal peculiarities, which can be addressed in a conciliatory manner.

It is clear from the context that the work of odontological identification of bodies, if based on previously made records and surpassing traditional techniques, the use of Modern technologies offer the possibility of a detailed view and considering the influence of analysis of radiographic technique, radiographic resource, clarity and presentation of distortions, in relation to reality, enabling the efficient analysis of the characteristics Specific factors, and those arising from the credibility of the declaration of identity, contribute to... It reduces time and the likelihood of error.

It can be concluded, therefore, that the forensic odontologist and the dental surgeon work together in this area. f/legal, where they excel by providing the necessary support through the appropriate channels. Human identification, such as through the dental arch, whether **structural, formative, or formal.**



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and/or comparison, with complete and up-to-date records as well as efficiency in handling the

Technological practices that enable analysis capable of identifying human beings in cases

of accidental deaths that require a thorough analysis to allow for proper identification.

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