

**NR\_key\_name:** OCCB8B339ACE9F5085256618004A9453  
**SendTo:** CN=Jeremy Gunn/O=ARRB @ ARRB  
**CopyTo:**  
**DisplayBlindCopyTo:**  
**BlindCopyTo:** CN=R ecord/O=ARRB  
**From:** CN=Chris Burton/O=ARRB  
**DisplayFromDomain:**  
**DisplayDate:** 06/03/1998  
**DisplayDate\_Time:** 10:45:05 AM  
**ComposedDate:** 06/03/1998  
**ComposedDate\_Time:** 9:34:36 AM  
**Subject:** Progress on Eyewitness Reliability

As much research as there is on this topic, there seem to be very few areas of agreement among researchers. The only relatively settled issue is that of the relationship between eyewitness confidence and accuracy. Virtually everyone agrees that confidence is not a generally accurate predictor of accuracy. However, some researchers (most notably Deffenbacher (1980) and Bothwell et al. (1987)) have argued that under certain conditions, the confidence-accuracy relationship is quite strong. There has been significant research done to determine whether the confidence-accuracy relationship can be improved by the manipulation of postevent conditions. For example, Kassin (1985) found that subjects who watched videotapes of themselves making an identification were better able to assess the accuracy of that identification than other subjects. Turtle & Yuille (1994) and Granhag (1997) found that repeated postevent questioning can also improve the confidence-accuracy relationship. The effect of stress/emotion on eyewitness reliability has been analyzed in several studies (e.g. Clifford & Hollin (1981); Scrivner & Safer (1988)), with somewhat mixed results. The problem with this area of research is that it is virtually impossible to create real-world levels of stress or emotion within ethical boundaries. Another group of studies has focused on whether there are inherent differences between accurate and inaccurate eyewitness accounts. These studies (e.g. Stern & Dunning (1994)) have found that while accurate accounts tend to simply report observations, inaccurate reports tend instead to focus on the thoughts and inferences of the subject. One possible complication in applying these rules to the testimony of doctors - it is quite possible that a doctor's memories of an examination or treatment could consist primarily of his own thoughts and inferences. Research on the relative accuracy "flashbulb memories" seemed promising. However, although flashbulb memories concern traumatic or emotional events, the phenomenon of particularly vivid memories seems to apply only to how one learned of the event in question (e.g. "Where were you when you heard that President Kennedy had been shot?"), and not to the event itself. No study that I have come across has addressed the relative accuracy of eyewitness accounts from professionals such as doctors. There has been limited research on the effects of long periods of time on recall accuracy. Predictably, this research has shown that recall accuracy declines significantly over periods of several years or more. I look forward to your input on my progress thus far, as well as on the focus of any further research.

**Body:**  
**recstat:** Record  
**DeliveryPriority:** N  
**DeliveryReport:** B  
**ReturnReceipt:**  
**Categories:**