



Comment on the interpretation of neonatal line evidence in forensic odontology

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Dear Editor,

We read with interest the recently published systematic review entitled “Insufficient evidence for the applicability of the neonatal line as evidence for live birth in forensic odontology” by Borah et al. (International Journal of Legal Medicine, 2026).

We appreciate the authors’ effort to synthesize the limited but valuable body of literature addressing the forensic significance of the neonatal line (NL). The cautious interpretation adopted in the review reflects the challenges inherent in studies involving fetal and infant material, where ethical and legal constraints inevitably limit sample size.

We would, however, like to offer a brief clarification regarding the interpretation of primary research findings, particularly our study (Canturk et al., Early Human Development, 2014), which was included in the qualitative analysis. Our work did not propose the neonatal line as a standalone or absolute indicator in forensic practice, but rather as a supportive histological marker whose interpretation must be contextualized within delivery mode, sectioning methodology, and case circumstances. These methodological boundaries were explicitly stated in the

original article. We acknowledge that the review does not explicitly describe the neonatal line as a sole forensic indicator; however, we would like to offer a brief clarification how our original findings should be interpreted within the stated methodological limits.

While the review appropriately highlights the current insufficiency of evidence for routine forensic application, we wish to clarify that these limitations primarily relate to the level of available evidence rather than to inconsistency in the primary findings. Across the included studies, including ours, the reported observations remain concordant regarding the presence of the neonatal line in live births and its absence in stillbirths.

We hope this comment contributes to a balanced interpretation of the existing literature and supports ongoing efforts toward larger, methodologically harmonized studies in forensic odontology.

Sincerely,

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