

STANDARDS OF CULPABILITY IN CRIMINAL LAW: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MENS REA APPROACH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT-LED CLINICS

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Background/Purpose:

- **Mens rea** (mental state at the time of a crime) is a cornerstone in determining criminal culpability
- Paper investigates ethical, legal, and methodological challenges of evaluating **mens rea**
- Focuses on the relevance to student-led clinics serving underserved populations with:
 - Complex mental health needs
 - Legal challenges

Objectives:

- Trace the historical evolution of **mens rea** defenses
- Evaluate current assessment standards
- Address emerging challenges, including neuroscience advances and societal shifts in perceptions of mental illness

Methods:

- Conducted a **systematic review of 22 studies** to examine:
 - Diverse methodologies
 - Populations and findings
 - Inconsistencies in Mens Rea rulings
- Incorporated insights from:
 - Empirical studies
 - Historical contexts
 - Legal precedents

Results:

- Identified significant inconsistencies and biases in current **mens rea** evaluation practices
- Standardized frameworks can:
 - Enhance transparency, consistency, and fairness in mental health evaluations
 - Equip medical trainees to bridge clinical and legal systems
- Found challenges in balancing:
 - Ethical concerns (discriminatory practices, patient advocacy vs. public safety)
 - Emerging neuroscience insights and shifting societal views.

Discussion:

- The analysis reveals significant inconsistencies and biases in current practices
- There is a need for standardized, evidence-based frameworks that medical trainees can incorporate into their practice to ensure:
 - Equitable patient care
 - Informed collaboration with legal systems
- Advocate for the integration of forensic psychiatric principles into clinical education to better equip future healthcare professionals to navigate the intersections of medicine, law, and ethics
 - Ensures that clinics serve as incubators for justice-oriented practices
 - Minimizes potential bias and error in mental health assessments

Conclusion:

- Calls for standardized, evidence-based approaches to **mens rea** evaluations in clinical training
- Reinforces the importance of interprofessional collaboration in:
 - Psychiatry
 - Medicine
 - Law
- Proposes a model for equipping future healthcare professionals to navigate the intersections of healthcare, law, and ethics effectively.

