

## Jurors ‘fail to grasp expert evidence’

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Nearly two thirds of expert witnesses believe that jurors are not equipped to understand their scientific evidence, a survey has shown.

Many of the experts — 40 per cent — also believe that technical trials should be heard by judges sitting on their own because of failings of the jury system.

The findings are contained in a national annual expert witness survey for this year, conducted by Bond Solon, a leading expert witness training company, in association with The Times. It covered hundreds of specialisms from medicine to engineering, forensic accounting and property.

Nearly half of those surveyed said that some expert witnesses still acted as “hired guns” and gave the opinion that their instructing lawyers required. One in three had felt pressured to change their evidence in a way that damaged their duty of impartiality to the court.

Next week the outcome of an appeal by Dr Waney Squier against being struck off by the General Medical Council is expected. After disputing the existence of shaken baby syndrome, her expert evidence was found to be “deliberately misleading” by a GMC panel.

Two thirds of experts in the survey thought that such cases would deter some from giving evidence in future.

Mark Solon, chairman of Wilmington Legal and founder of Bond Solon, said:

“These findings are worrying. They show there is a real risk that courts may not reach the correct conclusions.”