

## **PILOT PROJECT FOR THE PROCESSING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES**

Martine Lapointe, Karine Marcoux-Legault, Martine Bazinet, Annie Caltagirone, Véronique David, Manon Landry, Caroline Paquet, Mélanie Primeau, Sylvain Raymond and Diane Séguin, Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, Service Biologie/ADN

Our laboratory receives about 800 sexual assault (SA) cases per year, 80% of which include a sexual assault (SA) forensic examination kit. In 2014, our average turnaround time (TAT) for issuing a final report in SA cases was 310 days, with only 20% of cases receiving a preliminary response with an average TAT of 120 days. In order to gain efficiency in processing SA cases, a fast track (*Ligne Rapide Agressions Sexuelles, LRAS*) was tested over a three-month period with 98 SA cases containing a forensic examination kit, with or without additional exhibits. The purpose of *LRAS* is to improve customer services by increasing the proportion of SA cases receiving a preliminary response with a markedly reduced TAT. We aimed to achieve this by reducing the number of exhibits processed and the number of samples sent for Sperm Hy-Liter™ staining and by transferring some of the tasks normally performed by biologists to the technical team. This allowed the rapid processing of perishable items in order to handle the kits more efficiently and expedite their return to the investigators. Continuous evaluation was carried out in the course of the project enabling ongoing adjustments. As a result of *LRAS* processing, a preliminary response was sent to the investigator within 45 days in 90% of cases. Following the preliminary response, no further analysis was required in 55% of cases. Of the 859 exhibits originally received, 223 did not require any analysis. Most of these were clothing and bedding items that often require lengthy analysis and generate several samples for processing. Furthermore, we observed a marked reduction of 70% in the number of Sperm Hy-Liter™ slides needed to complete the case analysis. Finally, we estimate that overall, the equivalent of the work load of a full-time biologist can be gained with the *LRAS* track. The new *LRAS* track was implemented in the regular operations of our laboratory in June 2016.