

WE SOLVE CRIME WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

AUTHORS

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DISCUSSION

The tools at the disposal of the average forensic scientist are increasing with vast promise. Virtually every day an email blast is disseminated regarding a new DNA amplification system, probabilistic genotyping software such as STRmix™, the M-Vac system, rapid DNA processing or Y-screening methods. However, with each unique specialized tool we add to our arsenal, criminal offenders are learning new tricks as well; surfing the dark web, crossing borders or destroying their fingerprints. Identical twins, chimeras, complex DNA mixtures and trace amounts of DNA on the sole piece of evidence from a crime plague DNA serologists and analysts. Government laboratories are inundated with backlogs and budget restraints and it can often be difficult to devote extensive precious time to more complex cases that could alternatively be spent powering through dozens of 'straight-forward' cases. Additionally, each new tool, kit and software means the expense of a new validation.

The balance of justice requires us to honor our responsibility by addressing each unanswered question when possible and utilizing all available options; including, when necessary, seeking solutions from beyond the confines of our own laboratory walls. The field of forensic science is of the nature that scientists study at a minimum of one university where they meet like-minded students, proceed on to work at often times several laboratories throughout their careers, meet colleagues at conferences and communicate through social media like LinkedIn. Although, your own laboratory may not always have the right testing option or database to crack a case, chances are you know someone else who does. Utilization of international interagency cooperation to solve crimes; in particular, cases of serial offenders will be discussed. Furthermore, the process of establishing this cooperation through the proper channels and the means of seeking out 'niche' forensic testing options will be examined.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Kirsten Charlson and Allison Nunes from DNA Labs International for their support in helping our laboratory strive to be on the forefront of new technology. We would also like to thank Kaitlin Echols from Parabon Nanolabs and Matt Marvin from Ron Smith & Associates.