B88 National Forensic Laboratory Information System

Frank L. Sapienza, and Liqun Wong, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Diversion Control, 600 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA; Kevin J. Strom, PhD, Michael R. Baylor, PhD, and J. Valley Rachal, Research Triangle Institute, 3040 Cornwallis Road, Research Triangle Park, NC*

Attendees will learn about the NFLIS (National Forensic Laboratory Information System), a DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration)-sponsored project that systematically collects results from solid-dosage analyses conducted by state and local forensic laboratories. The results present approximate drug evidence seized by law enforcement agencies and sent to forensic laboratories for analysis, although variation in local policies can influence whether evidence will be submitted to a laboratory and subsequently analyzed.

The DEA and RTI (Research Triangle Institute) began implementing NFLIS in September 1997. To date, approximately 60% of state and local laboratories that perform solid-dosage drug analyses have joined NFLIS. This includes 32 state laboratory systems and 41 local laboratories, comprising a total of 170 individual forensic crime laboratories throughout the U.S. In the next several years, the NFLIS partnership will be enhanced to include federal laboratories such as those operated by the DEA and other agencies. With the goal of a census of all forensic laboratories in the U.S., the sustained recruitment of nonenlisted state and local forensic laboratories will continue as well.

NFLIS seeks to serve the laboratory community. The Interactive Data Site (IDS), which was first made available in January 2001, is of high value to both participating and potential laboratory recruits. The IDS combines timely and detailed analyses with a flexible, user-friendly system. It allows participating laboratories to run parameterized queries against the NFLIS database in a near real-time capacity. Labs can run queries for their own data at the individual case-level or can calculate aggregate regional and national results. IDS users can specify the time period, region, type of laboratory, and drug type in order to customize these queries.

NFLIS provides results of drugs identified and reported by participating laboratories. Aggregate data from the 170 NFLIS laboratories representing the period October 2001 to September 2002 will be presented. Highlighted findings will include the frequency of some selected “drugs of interest” and analyzed items by drug category that will show, by census region, the distribution of items by number and percent of total analyzed items in the state and local forensic laboratories. The number and percentage of analyzed items for the twenty-five most frequently reported drug items, as well as the major drug categories such as narcotic analgesics, benzodiazepines, “club drugs,” stimulants, and anabolic steroids, will also be detailed in tables and graphics. Select data will be presented on commonly identified drug combinations, special study analyses on drug purity, and drugs identified in strategic geographic locations.

NFLIS is assisting the drug enforcement community in several ways: supporting drug control/drug scheduling, highlighting variations in distribution of controlled substances across geographic areas and over time, improving estimates of drug availability, providing timely information about the diversion of licit drugs into illicit channels, identifying emerging drugs of abuse, increasing the understanding of the nation’s drug problem, and linking the drug enforcement and forensic laboratory community across the nation.

Drug Analysis, National Forensic Laboratory Information System, Drug Database

 ** Presenting Author*