



B63 Solving Burglary Cases in New York City Through the Biotracks® DNA Testing Project

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This presentation is designed to demonstrate the success of using current DNA technology and State and National databases to solve lesser offense crimes and will discuss the logistical challenges of outsourcing a large number of cases.

In 2000, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner's Department of Forensic Biology did a pilot study in which members of the FARU (Forensic Analysis Reconstruction Unit) team assisted the New York City Police Department in collecting evidence in thirty burglary cases. The DNA results for these cases generated two database matches. Based on this and other State's data, the New York City Police Department decided to create the grant funded "Biotracks" program. This program focused on testing DNA evidence collected from non suspect burglary cases since burglars have a >70% re-arrest rate. In New York City the "Biotracks" program was a collaborative effort between the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the Office of Chief Medical Examiner's Department of Forensic Biology (OCME), utilizing private contract laboratories for the DNA testing. The NYPD was responsible for collection and submission of the evidence to the private laboratories; the OCME as the local CODIS laboratory received the data and was responsible for the technical review of all samples and controls, as well as, for the CODIS uploads and subsequent hit resolutions.

From September 2003 to December 2006, 2200 cases with over 4400 evidence items had been tested. Approximately 970 CODIS eligible profiles were uploaded generating 130 Local, 10 State, and 3 National forensic case to case hits, and 250 State and 10 National offender hits. An additional batch of approximately 1000 cases is still in progress. Of the items submitted the best success rates (>85%) was obtained for blood samples and smoked items, while touched objects such as samples from tools only had a 11-12% success rate. Challenges encountered during the outsourcing process included irregular batch sizes, testing techniques, result reporting and prioritization requests. The in house review process included the technical review of all controls associated with each batch, two levels of technical review for all samples and mixture interpretation for all mixtures. OCME staff would represent DNA data for grand jury proceedings but several judges have required testimony from employees of the contracting laboratories.

Overall the program succeeded in identifying the perpetrators in many burglary crimes and also confirmed the presence of serial offenders by connecting cases to each other. Several burglary cases were linked to violent crimes such as sexual assault or homicide which again reinforces the importance of applying DNA testing to lesser crimes such as burglaries.

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