

# Using kin's DNA to find criminals focus of study

May 12 2006

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The use of DNA kinship analysis methods could be an effective tool in helping to identify potential criminal suspects, but there are also legal and policy implications of doing so.

We may not be our brother's keeper, but our brother's DNA could help land us in jail, according to a new report by researchers at University of California, Berkeley; Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston; and Harvard University.

"Finding Criminals Through DNA of their Relatives," published yesterday (Thursday, May 11) in *ScienceExpress*, the advance online version of the journal *Science*, shows that investigators could reap a significant boost in leads if they were to use DNA kinship analysis methods to search offender DNA databases to aid in locating potential criminal suspects. While kinship analysis is routinely used for such purposes as identifying decomposed corpses based on the DNA of relatives, up to now it has only been used informally and yielded sporadic results in criminal investigations.

"Kinship searching of the offender database can help catch a novice criminal, who is not himself in the database, through his brother or father who is a cataloged offender," says Charles Brenner, a visiting scholar in the Forensic Science Group at UC Berkeley's School of Public Health and one of the authors of the report. "If this method were implemented systematically, it could have many successes, but potentially debatable implications."

The reliability of using these methods, along with a discussion of the legal and policy issues involved, are in the *ScienceExpress* report.

The article is co-authored by Charles Brenner, Frederick R. Bieber, a medical geneticist at Brigham and Women's Hospital and associate professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School and David Lazer, director of the Program on Networked Governance and associate professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Source: of California, Berkeley, by Liese Greensfelder

Citation: Using kin's DNA to find criminals focus of study (2006, May 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2006-05-kin-dna-criminals-focus.html>

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