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# DNA phenotyping helps police fight crime but may be abusive



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Well, it may seem commonplace today, but it wasn't so long ago that DNA testing was a breakthrough technology for police investigating crimes.

Once a suspect had been identified, a sample of their DNA could persuasively put them at the scene of the crime.

Now, police forces are getting ready for another breakthrough from DNA... but one that works the other way around. It's called DNA phenotyping.

And it starts with traces of DNA found at the scene of the crime. The new technique can analyze that DNA and build a profile of the suspect, including some physical traits. Police can then narrow their search for suspects.

**Detective Sergeant Stacy Gallant** is with the [Toronto Police Service Homicide Squad](#) which has had some success with DNA Phenotyping.

**Susan Walsh** is working on developing this technology. She is an Assistant Professor of Biology at [Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis](#).

While the technology may be new to Canada, law enforcement in the Netherlands has been using DNA phenotyping since 2003. The country also has at least five pieces of legislation expressly dealing with its use. In some ways, the Netherlands is an example of where the debate about DNA phenotyping could end up.

**Amade M'charek** is a professor of anthropology at the [University of Amsterdam](#) and has spent years looking into the problems that can arise from the use of profiling technologies.

This segment was produced by The Current's Naheed Mustafa, Kristin Nelson and Ines Colabrese.

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