

Tekst 9

Television shows scramble forensic evidence

Rowan Hooper

- 1 FORENSIC science's spell in the limelight has hugely raised its appeal. Glitzy TV shows like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* have sent students flocking to forensics courses. But while this interest is sexing up the image of scientists, is it also stopping police catching criminals and securing convictions?
- 2 "Jurors who watch *CSI* believe that those scenarios, where forensic scientists are always right, are what really happens," says Peter Bull, a forensic sedimentologist at the University of Oxford. It means that in court, juries are not impressed with evidence presented in cautious scientific terms.
- 3 Detective sergeant Paul Dostie of Mammoth Lakes Police Department, California, found the same thing when he conducted a poll of forensic investigators and prosecutors. "They all agree that jurors expect more because of *CSI* shows," he says. And the "*CSI* effect" goes beyond juries, says Jim Fraser, director of the Centre for Forensic Science at the University of Strathclyde, UK. "Oversimplification of interpretations on *CSI* has led to false expectations, especially about the speed of delivery of forensic evidence," he says.
- 4 Another problem caused by media coverage of forensic science is that it informs criminals of the techniques the police employ to catch them. "People are forensically aware," says Guy Rutty of the Forensic Pathology Unit at the University of Leicester, UK. For this reason, some forensics experts are reluctant to cooperate with the media.
- 5 There is an increasing trend for burglars to use plastic gloves to avoid leaving their DNA at the scene. Dostie describes a murder case in which the attacker tried to wash away his DNA using shampoo. Police in Manchester, UK, say that car thieves there have started to dump cigarette butts from bins in stolen cars before they abandon them. "Suddenly the police have 20 potential people in the car," says Rutty.
- 6 None of this makes the forensic scientist's job any easier, but it probably won't prevent them from seizing a suspect, says Carlton Jones, a business manager at the UK's Forensic Science Service. "Forensically aware criminals are not something we have to really worry about."
- 7 It is extremely difficult not to contaminate a crime scene, even by wearing protective clothing. Rutty tested just how easy contamination is by asking a volunteer to walk around a sterile room and repeat a phrase. Rutty was able to retrieve the subject's DNA even though the man had been in the room for only a few seconds. Contamination occurred even if the subject was wearing a face mask of the kind used by crime scene investigators.
- 8 Mr Bull doubts that even a forensic scientist could get away with murder, such is the variety and sensitivity of the techniques available to investigators. A forensically savvy criminal might set them on a false trail initially, but that's the best he can hope for, he says. "If you want to commit the perfect murder there's one thing I'll ask you," he says. "Do you feel lucky, punk?"

www.newscientist.com

Tekst 9 Television shows scramble forensic evidence

- 3p **36** Geef van elk van de onderstaande uitspraken aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de alinea's 1-3.
Televisieseries zoals *CSI*
- 1 brengen echte forensische deskundigen soms op goede ideeën.
 - 2 dwingen echte forensische deskundigen zorgvuldiger om te gaan met bewijsmateriaal.
 - 3 tasten de overtuigingskracht van echte forensische bewijsvoering aan.
 - 4 vergroten de populariteit van opleidingen in de forensische wetenschap.
 - 5 wekken te hoge verwachtingen over de snelheid waarmee echt forensisch onderzoek verricht kan worden.
 - 6 zorgen ervoor dat juryleden in echte rechtzaken hun forensische kennis overschatten.
- Noteer het nummer van elke uitspraak, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p **37** The facts in paragraph 5 are presented as examples of
- A** cases that cannot be solved because the evidence has been wiped out.
 - B** confidential police information that has been leaked to the press.
 - C** news items that romanticise tricks used by criminals to mislead police investigators.
 - D** things that criminals have picked up from the media about forensic techniques.
- "it probably won't prevent them from seizing a suspect" (alinea 6, eerste zin)
- 2p **38** Om welke **twee** redenen is dit zo, volgens de alinea's 7-8?