FORENSIC DNA POLICY AND FUNDING UPDATE: THE US AND ABROAD

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Forensic DNA programs and corresponding databases have seen tremendous growth in recent years, in both the US and abroad. The presenters will provide attendees with an overview of significant changes in US policy and funding as it relates to forensic DNA programs, as well as a global perspective on the current status as well as proposed growth to DNA programs in countries throughout the world. In the US, 26 states have expanded DNA database programs to include certain arrestees, although most laws have vast differences in scope and other implementation issues such as collection point, expungement requirements and funding. In June 2013, the US Supreme Court released a ground-breaking decision in Maryland v. King, finding that arrestee DNA collection laws are not a violation of Fourth Amendment rights. Presenters will discuss this decision and explore implications it may have for current and future DNA database policies and related technology developments.

There is also continued interest in Congress and in state legislatures throughout the country in the status of backlogged rape kits and other rape kits that have never submitted for DNA analysis, regardless of the reason. Between database program expansion and potential new requirements regarding rape kit testing, actions taken by state legislatures and Congress will continue to have a significant impact on the incoming workload at public crime laboratories. Whether or not funding follows such future workload increases is a matter of some concern.

Globally, the international community has also seen drastic expansion of DNA database programs as well as interest in increased regional database sharing. As with the US states, there is a significant variation between countries in the extent of their DNA programs, and the existence and scope of databases. Sharing DNA data across borders is of growing interest for many countries, which has resulted in a focus on standards for cross-border DNA sharing.