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# MSU analysis could be helpful in rape cases

By [Andrew Krietz](#) (Last updated: 10 hours ago)

An MSU-assisted analysis of 10,500 sexual assault evidence kits from the city of Detroit might be used to prosecute hundreds of alleged rapists if results prove conclusive to investigators.

The MSU Center for Statistical Training and Consulting, or CSTAT, the Michigan State Police, the Detroit Police Department and others are coordinating the effort to process the kits in an attempt to understand how a rape happened and who committed it.

A \$600,000 allocation by the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board was given to the various agencies to begin the study to assist the defunct Detroit Police Crime Laboratory, said John Collins, the forensic science division director for the Michigan State Police. Sexual assault kits contain physical DNA evidence collected in a clinical setting from a victim's body after a rape, Collins said.

The evidence is used to support an investigation, Collins said, but scientists involved with the study will not pursue a criminal considering their scientific standpoint.

"We're here in a supporting role," Collins said. "In terms of what management decisions are made or what our results mean on the significance of the backlog will be made by officials in Detroit."

The Michigan State Police DNA labs for the research are in Grand Rapids, Lansing and Northville, Mich., Collins said. Additionally, private labs across the state will be used to move the study along, he said.

MSU's is conducting a statistical projection on how many kits should be tested at the initial stages, said Jeff Nye, the biological program coordinator at the Michigan State Police.

As with a typical statistical problem, forensic scientists asked CSTAT to randomize the total number of kits with 95 percent confidence of how accurate they would expect the remainder of the kits to be, Nye said.

CSTAT required 400 kits be used for the sample, in order to achieve a 95 percent confidence level, Nye said.

"Once we look at the 400 (kits) and the statistics are done, that would give us a plan of how many more scientists, prosecutors and officers (needed) to analyze the rest of the batch and see how much (additional) work is necessary," Nye said.

Officials at CSTAT declined to comment on the study.

Although scientists will not be making the decisions to prosecute an individual, Robert Moran, chief of the special investigative division of the Wayne County Prosecuting Office, said officials will pursue a person if necessary.

"If, for example, we find evidence that a crime has occurred — if we can try someone or go forward with a case, we will," Moran said.

It might take about two-and-a-half years to complete the first batch of 400 cases, Moran said.

The numerous kits will take time to process, Collins said.

"It definitely is a time-consuming process," he said. "DNA analysis is a very complex process and it doesn't happen overnight."

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