CODIS

The case that I chose has to do with the arrest of Ernesto Mercado, 54, of Arlington, VA. He was a serial rapist who had at least 6 victims in Georgetown area of Northwest Washington D.C.. In all of the attacks, the victims were asleep, woke up to the assault, and Mercado fled the scene when the victim woke up. The five attacks that occurred also matched DNA evidence of an attack that happened right off of University of Maryland campus in College Park, Maryland. The charges included June 26, 2008, July 10, 2009, February 28, 2010, August 29, 2010, and August 31, 2012 sexual assaults in District of Columbia. Mercado was arrested on October 1, 2024 and has a preliminary hearing scheduled for October 10, 2024. This is an ongoing investigation.

DNA was an integral part of finding the man currently arrested for this ongoing investigation. Through genealogy, which is the practice of using existing DNA samples to find relatives close to the unknown DNA. This makes the list of possible suspects way shorter and easier to get through.

The DNA that was used in this case was collected from the brave rape victims via rape kits.

DNA samples from persons who are not convicted of a crime should be stored in this database. This way, if the person themselves or a relative of them commits a crime, it will be easier to find the criminal and victims (and their families) will have answers to their attack sooner rather than later.

References:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/serial-sexual-predator-charged-five-cold-case-rapes>

<https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/police-used-genealogy-to-make-break-in-georgetown-umd-sexual-assaults-cold-case/3732156/?os=v&ref=app>

<https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/how-genetic-genealogy-helps-crack-cold-cases-potomac-river-rapist/2144788/?os=v&ref=app>