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CSI boffins: You can't ID crims from bitemarks on victims Corpse-chomp research discredits gnasherprinting

By **Lewis Page**

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Topflight CSI boffins have cast doubt on the apparently "commonly held belief" in forensics that criminals can be positively identified from the bite marks they leave on their victims.

"Bitemark identification is not as reliable as DNA identification," explains the study's lead author, Prof Raymond G Miller of the University of Buffalo.



"With DNA, the probability of an individual not matching another can be calculated," he says. "In bitemark analysis, there have been few studies that looked at how many people's teeth could have made the bite."

Miller and his colleagues teamed up with Robert Dorion, author of *Bitemark Evidence: A Color Atlas*, which is apparently "the only comprehensive textbook on the subject of bitemarks". The boffins embarked on a probing analysis of the subject.

According to UBuff:

The study investigated three main questions: is it possible to determine biter identity among people with similarly aligned teeth; is it possible to determine how many individuals

from a larger sample might also be considered as the biter; and, if there is bite pattern distortion, is it enough to rule out a specific biter while still including a non-biter?

These knotty issues were investigated by a complex procedure involving a hundred sets of model teeth made of stone, which were used to make bite marks in skin taken from dead human bodies. (The UBuff report notes regretfully that "current human subject restrictions limit experimentation on living subjects".)

The result? "Bitemark evidence should be approached with caution", apparently. There is more from UBuff [here](http://www.buffalo.edu/news/10446) (<http://www.buffalo.edu/news/10446>). Our moderating staff look forward keenly to a volley of comments along the lines of "there's a subject you can really get your teeth into". ®

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