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Dental patterns as reliable as DNA tests 30th Jun 2010

A person's dental patterns can identify a person as accurately as DNA testing in forensics.

That's according to new Spanish research that suggests a person's dental patterns can be used as proof of their identity with the same degree of reliability as DNA testing, the method normally employed by forensic police in identifying dead bodies.

The researchers – at the University of Granada (UGR) drew evidence from the dental patterns of more than 3,000 people.

Lead author Stella Martin de las Heras, a professor of Legal and Forensic Medicine at the university, says: 'There is sufficient dental diversity between people to enable a scientifically based human identification method to be developed for forensic purposes.'

The dental experts carried out a statistical analysis of 3,166 full and partial sets of teeth taken from the databases in the National Surveys of Oral Health of 1993, 2000 and 2005.

The results were published in *Forensic Science International*.

However, the scientist does acknowledge the limitations of using dental patterns, accepting that 'dental characteristics have low stability within the population compared with mitochondrial DNA sequences'.

The dental patterns of a population depend on oral health status and, therefore, on age and the therapeutic dental approach of the time i.e. more teeth are now being restored rather than extracted.

She adds: 'But by analysing the databases of dental patterns in Spanish populations according to different age groups and birth cohorts, we found test results with high homogeneity for all the databases, which shows the value of this system for identifying people, and its forensic utility.'

Click [here](#) for an insight into the grisly world of the forensic dentist.



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DNA testing is usually employed to identify dead bodies

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