DNA evidence convict rapists

Vinessa Lynch and Carolyn Hanekom

International studies indicate that there is no better way of getting rapists off the streets to protect women and young girls than DNA and the use of a DNA database to link them.

DNA evidence can aid in the conviction of rapists. A major advantage of DNA profiling is that it can provide a match to an individual's DNA unique.

Although South Africa is not at the forefront of crucial DNA legislation that will give the police the ability to immediately take sexual offenders off the streets, the true sexual violence statistics in the world continue to accumulate.

But these are not statistics – they are verified women and children.

According to the United Nations, South Africa ranks first in the world per capita for sexual assault and rape. Reported rape cases in South Africa are about 300 every day. Many incidents of rape are not reported, but statistics can be based on figures. 

One study on the experience of rape in South Africa, described how women and girls are assaulted.

Dr. Vanessa Lynch, a forensicOdontologist at the University of Cape Town, said, “Rape can have a profound impact on the victim’s life."

What rape survivors should do:

- Not change their clothing.
- Not shower or wash out any part of their body.
- Report the incident to the police.
- Go to a medical doctor or forensic nurse within 24 hours for DNA evidence to be collected.

DNA evidence can be obtained from a person’s body or clothing. DNA is found in body fluids, such as semen or saliva, as well as blood, skin cells and hair.

Report sexual assault within 48 hours to your local police station and ask for DNA evidence to be collected by a medical practitioner or forensic nurse.