



Imagine her scepticism when Claire French, a 24-year old forensic scientist, thought her doctoral research may have produced an innovative method for identifying the source of body cells, such as vaginal secretions or saliva. In fact, for three long months her lips were sealed, and she repeatedly tested her findings in a University of Auckland laboratory to ensure there was no mistake. When she finally broke her silence, there was shared delight about the discovery's potential to revolutionise the investigation of sex crimes. The patented technique can instantly categorize DNA cells, has the prospect of wide-ranging commercial applications. In her future work with the crown research institute Environmental Science and Research, French hopes to use her ground-breaking research to develop a portable kit to be used at crime scenes and in laboratories world-wide. Her work to date has earned her the 2006 MacDiarmid Young Scientist of the Year Award.

