

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER



THE 'CSI EFFECT'

Crime-scene science less sexy in real life

BY SIDHARTHA BANERJEE MONTREAL

The program CSI and its weekly cracking of perfectly crafted fictional tales of murder most foul has enthralled TV viewers but done little to make the justice system more efficient in reality, a Montreal criminologist says.

The so-called "CSI effect" has been negligible at best, says University of Montreal professor Benoit Dupont.

However, CSI has made crime-scene science sexier and more appealing to the public.

And while viewers realize that it's fiction, many North Americans' perceptions of police are based solely on what they see on television.

Some prosecutors in the

United States have blamed the CSI effect for cases being dismissed or the accused acquitted when forensic evidence is lacking.

Quebec provincial police forensic scientist Alexandre Beaudoin says most of what viewers see on CSI is accurate and in use, but dressed up considerably.

"Almost 99 per cent of what you see is real, but it's so extreme, you couldn't do it in real life," Mr. Beaudoin says.

A criminal investigation is mostly processing paperwork. But nobody wants to watch someone taking notes.

"It would be a lot more like *The Office* than *CSI*," Mr. Dupont said.

» *Canadian Press*