

Drug test lets parents check up on kids

ONE-TIME-USE KIT: For \$64.99 US, hair sample is sent to U.S. with promise of results online in 48 hours

BY CHERYL CHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Big Brother isn't watching, but Big Mother (or Father) is.

Parents can already use GPS tracking devices in cars or cellphones to monitor their teens' whereabouts, and online monitoring tools to track their kids' Internet usage.

Now an American company is marketing a home drug-testing kit to parents who suspect their teen is up to no good.

For \$64.99 US, HairConfirm can let parents know within 48 hours if their teen is using drugs.

"It can test for seven different drugs — including amphetamines, cocaine, ecstasy, PCP and marijuana," said Confirm BioSciences CEO Zeynep Ilgaz, whose San Diego-based company posted revenues last year of \$2.6 million.

The one-time-use kit provides an accurate drug history of up to 90 days, including frequency of use, said Ilgaz.

"It can tell if the person is experimenting, if they're a recreational user or addicted to it."

— Zeynep Ilgaz, Confirm BioSciences

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About 30 to 40 strands of hair — "it doesn't matter if it's coloured, dirty or has gel in it" — are needed. A lab in Ohio analyzes the hair molecules and results are posted online within two business days.

The kit — which includes a hair-collection foil and a hair-specimen pouch — comes with prepaid postage within the United States. Canadian users need to pay for their own postage.

The product, which debuted in June, has sold more than 3,000 kits online. The company has signed

deals with Kmart and Amazon.com and is in talks with Canadian retailers.

Although HairConfirm is aimed at parents, Ilgaz said it has been unexpectedly popular in the workplace.

"We have employers using it to test their employees and employees testing themselves first before they seek employment [in the U.S.],"

Ilgaz stresses the kit isn't meant to be a substitute for parent-child communication.

"[Parents] should tell their kids and they can tell their friends, 'I can't do drugs. I'm being drug-tested.'"

Vancouver psychologist Janice Ebenstiner said such devices can act as deterrents, but she would not recommend using them without the teen's knowledge.

"It's the parent's job to monitor, but it needs to be open and discussed," she said. "Trust has to be built. It's better than having to spy on your kids."

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Zeynep Ilgaz, president of San Diego-based Confirm BioSciences, says kit can test for seven drugs, including cocaine, ecstasy and marijuana

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