



## Tricho-Tech passes the test with sports cases

Rhodri Evans | Feb 3 2005



Drug-test demands among firms and for law cases grows

DRUG-TESTING company Tricho-Tech is looking to continued rapid growth due to demand for its laboratory services.

The Cardiff company, which tests for illegal drugs in hair, saliva and urine samples has at least one high-profile client - being named in newspaper reports as the company Manchester United footballer Rio Ferdinand turned to for a drug test in his bid to overturn a playing ban last year.

While other tests carried out by the Pentwyn-based company's are less high profile, the majority of its work (around 60%) is now for legal and child protection cases.

Demand for the company's services has seen it grow rapidly in recent years. Since starting out in Cardiff Medicentre in 1993, Tricho-Tech's staff numbers have grown from four to 28.

After four years of high double-digit growth, the company last year achieved a turnover of £1.27m, up from £198,000 four years earlier.



Tricho-Tech's development director Graham Sievers said the company believed there was further scope for a strong expansion of turnover in the current year.

"We have had very consistent growth and we are expecting that to continue with a 45% target for this year," Mr Sievers said.

The company works for more than 2,000 clients. Its legal case work includes hair-sample tests in custody cases to prove whether or not a parent with a history of drug abuse has used drugs in recent months.

The company also carries out clinical, medical and research work. That sector accounts for around 20% of the company's turnover, as does staff drug testing for companies.

Tricho-Tech counts the likes of the Civil Aviation Authority among its clients, as more companies drug test staff to ensure health and safety standards are upheld.

"The fastest growing area is the workplace area because companies in the UK have been very cautious for fear of contravening privacy and human rights," said Mr Sievers.

"It is important to achieve a balance. In health and safety certain areas like pilots, train and bus drivers it is less easy to make a case against it."

The company has a unique selling point in that it is the only one in the UK currently to be accredited for testing of hair, saliva and urine samples.

"No one else holds it for all three - it is unique in the UK said Mr Sievers."

The company continues to carry out research in to the development of new drugs tests.

Tricho-Tech is currently involved in research to develop a test for hair which would tell if someone had been given one of the common "date-rape" drugs.

Such a test would be a valuable tool for law enforcement because current tests are often carried out after traces of the drug have cleared from the victim's body.

"It would be ground-breaking to detect it in hair," said Mr Sievers. "Too many of the cases get reported too late after the incident happened."

Other areas of growth for the company include the possibility of testing racehorses to detect doping and the detection of illegal drug use for sports clubs.