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After the “Act on the Electronic Monitoring of Specific Sex Offenders” entered into force in September 2008, the Korean Ministry of Justice began in earnest to implement electronic monitoring as a tool for the enhanced supervision of sex offenders on probation. The Korean electronic monitoring scheme does not aim to reduce costs of incarceration or relieve prison overcrowding but rather seeks to reduce recidivism, promote rehabilitation, and protect the public. Tied to political interests, the use of electronic monitoring has rapidly grown over a short period of time and has become the most prominent program for sex offenders in Korea. Due to its unusual development process and unique characteristics, Korean electronic monitoring practice constitutes a new phase in the development of electronic monitoring.

This study seeks to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of electronic monitoring on recidivism among Korean sex offenders. The findings provide a critical evaluation of the “belief” in the effectiveness of electronic monitoring as a means to reduce recidivism (which is often used to justify its application) and, overall, refute the conclusion of some previous electronic monitoring studies that postulated a fixed effect of electronic monitoring, in which electronic monitoring was described as a “treatment” that may have a deterrent effect across all types of offenders and crimes.

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