

Scientists identify memory gene

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An international study led by U.S. geneticists has discovered a gene -- called Kibra -- that is associated with memory performance in humans.

The researchers at the Translational Genomics Research Institute in Phoenix say their findings may be used to develop new medicines for diseases affecting memory, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, by providing a better understanding of how memory works at the molecular level.

The research team was led by Dietrich Stephan, the institute's neurogenomics division director, and included colleagues at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, the Banner Alzheimer's Institute in Phoenix and the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The team used Affymetrix Inc.'s Human Mapping 500K Array to analyze 500,000 DNA markers simultaneously, providing a genetic blueprint for the memory-study participants. The researchers discovered the Kibra gene by comparing the genetic blueprints of people with good memory to those of people with poor memory, looking for the genetic variations consistently present in one group, but not the other.

The study appears in the current issue of the journal Science.

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