

Mutant gene may have affected Abe Lincoln

January 29 2007

U.S. scientists say they might have discovered the origin of a disease identified in 11 generations of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's family.

The University of Utah study focused on a protein that keeps nerve cells flexible. For example, if you bend a knee, the nerves stretch but don't break. But the study found that when the gene producing that protein was disabled in worms, their nerve cells broke.

The discovery may provide an explanation for spinocerebellar ataxia type 5 -- a disease previously tied to a human version of the gene and identified in 11 generations of Lincoln's family, starting with his paternal grandparents. The disease might also have afflicted Lincoln.

"Were Lincoln's nerves shattered? We don't know. But our study raises the possibility that they were," said biology Professor Michael Bastiani, the study's senior author.

The research is detailed in the Jan. 29 issue of The Journal of Cell Biology.

Copyright 2007 by United Press International

Citation: Mutant gene may have affected Abe Lincoln (2007, January 29) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-01-mutant-gene-affected-abe-lincoln.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.