

# Saudi begins gene mapping to research diseases

December 9 2013

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A technician prepares vials for DNA testing at a laboratory in Madrid on November 20, 2007

Saudi Arabia has launched a genetic code mapping project aimed at identifying the basis of chronic diseases prevalent in the desert kingdom.

The Saudi Human Genome Program will be run by Saudi researchers, in cooperation with the US Life Technologies Corporation, at the King

Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST).

"The programme aims to identify the causes of prevalent chronic diseases in Saudi Arabia," Prince Moqrin bin Abdul Aziz, the second deputy prime minister, said Sunday.

The programme will work over five years on sequencing 100,000 human genomes to study both normal and disease-associated genes specific to the Saudi population, said a statement by Life Technologies.

"This genomic variant data will be fully analysed and used to create a Saudi-specific database that will provide the basis for future development of personalised medicine in the Kingdom," it said.

The sequencing will be performed using Life Technologies' semiconductor-based Ion Proton DNA sequencer, it added.

The instruments will be deployed at 15 [genome](#) centres across the Kingdom, it said.

"We believe the Saudi Human Genome Program will help shape the understanding of health and disease and usher in an era of personalised medicine in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," said KACST president Mohammed Al-Suwayl.

KACST and China's Shenzhen-based BGI succeeded in 2010 in decoding the entire genetic makeup of the single-humped camel, the omnipresent dromedary native to the Arabian Peninsula.

Unlocking the genetics underpinning the camel's immune system could lead to potential medical discoveries, and the genome data can also help scientists understand better how the mammal produces its highly nutritious and medically valuable milk.

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Citation: Saudi begins gene mapping to research diseases (2013, December 9) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-saudi-gene-diseases.html>

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