

Gene patents are a hindrance to innovation

The following is an excerpt.

You carry a set of instructions in every cell, encrypted in DNA. [Your genome](#), 3 billion letters of genetic code, is not only unique to you now, but is unique to every human who has ever and will ever exist. It contains about 22,000 genes and it was a surprise to geneticists on completion of the Human Genome Project in April 2003 that we bear so few, fewer than a roundworm. But what you might find even more shocking is that hundreds, possibly [thousands of these genes are effectively owned by someone else](#).

The birth of gene patenting rapidly followed our ability to read human genes in the 1990s, and in general patents cover the processes of extracting, reading and diagnostic tests for specific bits of an individual's DNA. There is a myth that one fifth of the genes that each of us bears in our cells are patented, but this does not quite stand up to close scrutiny: the language used in many of these patents does not necessarily preclude their use. Nevertheless, any useful work, including research and genetic diagnosis, on a significant chunk of your unique genetic makeup is prohibited unless licensed.

View the original article here: [Gene patents are a hindrance to innovation](#)