

Genetic fossils betray hepatitis B's ancient roots

The following is an excerpt.

A virus that causes liver diseases in people may have infected birds that shared the planet with dinosaurs.

More than 82 million years ago, a hepatitis B virus infected an ancient bird and got stuck in its genome, a molecular version of a tar pit, researchers report April 30 in *Nature Communications*. Using fragments of DNA found in modern-day zebra finches, evolutionary biologist Alexander Suh and colleagues at the University of Münster in Germany pieced together a complete genome of the ancient virus. Their analysis suggests that hepatitis B is some 63 million years older than previously thought and that it probably originated in birds and jumped into mammals later.

Read the full article here: Genetic fossils betray hepatitis B's ancient roots