

Does our anthropocentric view of genetics keep us from scientific discovery?

In a normal laboratory setting, one can usually find a human behind the bench with the pipette and bacteria in the petri dish. But for much of evolution microbes were actually running the show.

In the laboratory that is life, bacteria have been inadvertently experimenting with each other for millions of years before humans came into existence. In fact, Ed Yong writes at Aeon, humans are just bystanders in the epic battle between microbes. And, the diseases they give us, which we view as a microbe's purpose for living, is likely nothing more than a chance twist of fate.

Is this anthropocentric view of our world keeping science from discovering and pursuing experiments and ideas that could more efficiently unravel the workings of biology? Some scientists think yes. For example, instead of focusing on the few varieties of the streptococcus bacteria that cause human infection, why are we not looking at the thousands of varieties that coexist in our noses and airways?

A growing number of studies show that our anthropocentric view is sometimes unjustified. The adaptations that allow bacteria, fungi and other pathogens to cause us harm can easily evolve outside the context of human disease. They are part of a microbial narrative that affects us, and can even kill us, but that isn't about us.

Read the full, original story: [Coincidental killers](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Is "reductionism" in behavioral genetics a boon or curse?](#), Kenrick Vezina, Genetic Literacy Project
- [Bacterial genetics helps defeat antibiotic-resistant "super-bugs"](#), Rebecca Goldin, Genetic Literacy Project