Genetic explanation for short stature in humans

It's not another tall tale: Evolutionary biologists have developed a new understanding of the genetic basis of short stature in humans.

Also known as the pygmy phenotype, a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows that this trait has evolved several times over the course of human history.

In the Central African rain forest, several groups of hunter-gatherers are significantly shorter than their agricultural neighbors are. Both the Batwa people in the east and the Baka in the west are commonly referred to as pygmies.

But exactly what factors were contributing to their reduced height wasn't clear. By analyzing the genomes of the Batwa and the Baka, and comparing them with the genomes of their average-height neighbors, the researchers were able to show that these two groups of humans showed variations in the region of the genome that codes for human growth hormone receptors and bone formation.

"We have found the strongest evidence yet that the pygmy phenotype is controlled by genetics," said <u>Luis Barreiro</u> of the University of Montreal and the senior author of this recent study.

Read the full, original story: Strongest evidence yet that pygmies' short stature is genetic