Genes responsible for frizzy hair, unibrows identified

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Sometimes it seems like hair does everything except what you want it to do. A new study of the genes behind unibrow, balding, hair curliness, and other hair conditions could, however, help explain why hair sometimes sprouts between our eyebrows, turns gray, thins in a pattern, or grows on our chins.

Geneticists at University College London performed a genome-wide association study of over 6,000 Latin American individuals. They evaluated them for seven different hair features — curliness, color, graying, balding, unibrow, brow thickness, and beard thickness — and then scanned the genome looking for single-letter changes that correlated with these traits.

Their report, published in Nature Communications, found 18 regions of interest, 10 of which were new to science. Some regions were found to influence more than one trait, but most regions were specific to one of the hair qualities studied.

The study is the first to identify genes associated with hair graying, unibrow, and eyebrow and beard thickness.

Further research will be needed to zero in on the individual genes in question. “The genome-wide association study basically shows you landmarks, hot spots, regions of activity,” points out Rui Yi, a developmental biology professor at the University of Colorado, who was not involved in the study. “But you don’t know which nucleotide is creating that activity.”

Read full, original post: From unibrow to bushy beard, scientists find genes that shape your fuzz