

Electronic health records expanding research in medicine, human evolution

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Recently, scientists published yet another [study](#) about the modern genetic legacy of prehistoric interbreeding between humans and Neanderthals. The study presented new evidence that genetic variants inherited from Neanderthals affect the health of people today, by increasing their risk for medical conditions ranging from depression to skin lesions. While the story about how our distant ancestors shape who we are today is fascinating, the study's most important result isn't really about Neanderthals.

The study's true significance involves something that may sound mundane, but is, in fact, a powerful new tool in biomedical research: electronic health records. Though not explicitly designed for research, electronic health records promise to solve a tough problem in medical genetics — as long as we figure out how to use them securely and ethically.

Electronic health records are something we typically associate with medical bureaucracy, not cutting-edge science. They're designed to help medical practitioners do a better job keeping track of a patient's care, thereby make medicine cheaper, safer, and more efficient. But it turns out that electronic health records have another important use as well: They may help solve a critical research problem, one that has hampered our ability to take full advantage of the much-hyped DNA technologies that are supposed to transform 21st-century medicine.

Read full, original post: [How Your Genetic Health Records Could Change Genetics Research](#)