Gene that leads to cancer also responsible for complex life

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How did life get so complicated? No, really. Molecular biologist Erik Hanschen would like to know.

"It really is a fundamental question," said Hanschen, a PhD student at the University of Arizona at Tucson. "What is the basis of multi-cellularity and when did it evolve?"

Hanschen and his colleagues believe the answer might be hiding in our DNA. Specifically, they report in the journal <u>Nature Communications</u>, in a gene known as RB, which seems to be responsible for turning single-celled creatures into cooperative multicellular groups.

But RB's significance goes far beyond the academic. In humans (and pretty much everything else), it regulates the cell cycle — how cells grow and divide during their life spans. Problems with the gene are a known cause of cancer.

"If we understand the process by which cells cooperate for multicellular life, maybe it will tell us something about why cancer occurs at all," said another co-author, Pierre Durand of the University of Witwatersand in Johannesburg.

Read full, original post: This gene helps prevent cancer. Did it also give rise to all complex life?