

Genetics of height: It may be too complex for scientists to crack the code

[W]hen the human genome was sequenced, scientists like [[Joel Hirschhorn](#), a geneticist at Boston Children's Hospital and the Broad Institute] thought they could plumb that data to track all the height genes....

That effort started slowly. But now, Hirschhorn says, "For height there are about 700 variants known to affect height, each of them usually with a pretty small effect on height, usually like a millimeter or less."

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Even so, the traits [Hirschhorn] found only explain about a quarter of the inherited height factors. And, frustratingly, for most of those variants scientists have no idea what they actually do.

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Hirschhorn and his colleagues are expanding their already massive study of 700,000 subjects. That approach has [drawn skepticism](#) from some scientists, who think it's a waste of effort.

David Goldstein, a professor of genetics at Columbia University, says an expanded effort could ultimately implicate every gene in existence, and that hardly helps scientists narrow down the biological factors that contribute to height.

It's likely scientists will never be able to figure out what these hundreds of common variants do to influence height, Goldstein says. Instead, a much better strategy is [to look] for rare variants that pack a big punch.

[The study can be found [here](#).]

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Genetics of Height is Way Complex, It Turns Out](#)