

## Williams syndrome: ‘Good humor’ genetic disorder may be literary basis for elves and fairy tales

For individuals with distinctive elf-like facial features, goodness of heart and vulnerability of trust are symptoms of a genetic [disorder](#) – Williams Syndrome – that affects an estimated 1 in 7,500 to 10,000 people.

...

Williams Syndrome, also called Williams-Beuren Syndrome or Elfin Facies Syndrome, is an autosomal dominant condition. In a small percentage of cases, people with Williams Syndrome inherit the chromosomal deletion from a parent with the condition.

...

Biologist Howard Lenhoff began to study the syndrome after his own daughter was diagnosed with the disorder. “It seems logical to me, and to others, that the legends we hear about music-loving, kind-hearted fairies and elves might be the way people used to talk about Williams.”

Before the advent of science and medicine, Williams Syndrome could have been the inspiration behind Grimm’s’ fairy tales, and supernatural interpretations saw the illness as being brought about via witchcraft and demonic possession rather than germs and genetic abnormalities.

...

In medieval and Renaissance Europe, their musical inclinations along with their verbal dexterity and good humour, could have made Williams people suitable for roles as court jesters or entertainers.... Historian Suzannah Lipscomb argues that many, if not all, the court “fools” of England’s early Tudor period were people with learning disabilities.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Williams syndrome: When loving too much can be a disorder](#)**