Harvard’s George Church targets consumer genetic testing market, offering royalties for users

Harvard University genetics guru George Church — one of the scientists at the forefront of the CRISPR genetic engineering revolution — announced on Wednesday [Feb. 8] a start-up, Nebula Genomics, that will use the blockchain to not only allow individuals to share their personal genome for research purposes, but retain ownership and monetize their DNA through trading of a custom digital currency.

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Nebula took direct aim at 23andMe in its white paper, and one reason why it can offer genetic testing for less.

“Today, 23andMe (23andme.com) and Ancestry (ancestry.com) are the two leading personal genomics companies. Both use DNA microarray-based genotyping for their genetic tests. It is an outdated and significantly less powerful alternative to DNA sequencing […] it generates small amounts of data that are of limited value to individual data owners and researchers.”

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Nebula claims its peer-to-peer network, based on the blockchain, will enable data buyers to acquire genomic data directly from data owners without middlemen. This will enable data owners to receive sequencing subsidies from data buyers and profit from sharing their data. The model will also deal with privacy concerns by allowing data owners to privately store their genomic data and control access to it. Data owners will remain anonymous, while data buyers will be required to be fully transparent about their identity.

Read full, original post: Harvard genetics pioneer wants to monetize DNA with digital currency, and defeat 23andMe