



Getting your genes to fit

By Dr. Roger Landry

No, this isn't about weight loss, and yes, I spelled genes correctly. This is not about fashion but function... and empowerment... and the rest of your life.

History made

On April 13, 2003 the thirteen year-long international Human Genome Project announced its completion. For the first time we had a mosaic of the DNA of we humans. This opened a door to places previously unknown. We've already seen an explosion of products to discover ancestry, but for certain we can expect that this brave new world of genome exploration will have major implications for health and aging.

Symphonic lifestyle

For several decades now, ever since the results of the ten-year long MacArthur Study on Aging, we've known that our lifestyle choices have profound effects on our aging journey much more than our genes. Paying attention to whole self: the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual components is key. Like the wind, brass, strings and percussion of a symphony orchestra, our holistic lifestyle must be in synchrony with each other, and when they are, magical things happen. And now, with our knowledge of the genome, we're getting an understanding of just how some of that magic happens.

Epigenetics and you

An exploding new field of Epigenetics is rocking the world of our understanding of how genes work. Officially, the Oxford dictionary defines Epigenetics as "the study of changes in organisms caused by gene expression rather than alterations of the genetic code itself." In my simplistic understanding, it means the effect of environment on how, and if, a gene expresses itself. There's a lot more we need to do to fully understand epigenetics, but there's one big preliminary observation that should set off alarms for all of us... in a good way.

It appears that lifestyle has the possibility of shutting down or muting the effect of genes responsible for many chronic diseases! (The exclamation point is an understatement). We're not sure of the mechanism but it may be through a mechanism which affects inflammation. In any case, research maybe be getting closer to understanding why lifestyle choices are a more powerful determinant in how we age. Why, as the MacArthur Study found, identical twins with the same DNA and different lifestyles, have different aging journeys.

Now what?

So what does all this mean to you? At a minimum, we're getting validation that lifestyle trumps genes. This should be a motivator for us all to focus like a laser on our day to day choices: how much we move; how much we keep learning; how connected we are to others; and what our purpose is.

And it tells us why a TIME cover of Jan 18, 2010 declared: "WHY YOUR DNA ISN'T YOUR DESTINY." Why we can't blame our parents. And why our future is in our hands.

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Learn more at www.HealthDesign.org/Dr-Roger-Landry