

## FINDINGS

Thursday, August 17, 2006; A08

### Gene May Be Key To Brain Evolution

Scientists think they have found a key gene that helped the human brain evolve from that of humans' chimplike ancestors.

In just a few million years, one area of the human genome seems to have evolved about 70 times as fast as the rest of the genetic code and appears to have had a role in the rapid tripling of the size of the brain's crucial cerebral cortex, scientists reported today in the journal *Nature*.

Co-author David Haussler of the University of California at Santa Cruz said his team found strong but circumstantial evidence that a gene called HAR1F played a key role.

That gene didn't exist until 300 million years ago and is present only in mammals and birds, not fish or animals without backbones.

There are only two differences in that one gene between a chimp and a chicken, Haussler said, but there are 18 differences in the gene between human and chimp, and they all seemed to occur in the development of man.

He attributed the dramatic change to the stress of man getting out of trees and walking on two feet.

The scientists still don't know specifically what the gene does, but it is involved with early development of the cerebral cortex, which is responsible for some of the more complex brain functions, including language and information processing.

### Arkansas Gains In Fight Against Fat

The governor of Arkansas, who has promoted good health since losing 100 pounds himself, claimed a victory in the battle of the bulge yesterday with the release of obesity test results for the state's schools.

Officials said the most recent assessment included body mass index measurements on 371,082 students. They found 20.4 percent were overweight, down from 20.9 percent when the program began reporting data in 2004.

Arkansas is the only state to require annual testing of body mass index for public school students.

"While these numbers continue to go up nationally, in Arkansas we have stopped the runaway train," said Gov. Mike Huckabee, a potential Republican presidential candidate.

The state has sought to boost access to healthful foods and encouraged physical activity in schools.

### Mammography Centers Waning

More than 500 U.S. facilities that conduct mammograms to detect breast cancer closed between 2001 and 2004, a development that may keep poor or uninsured women from being screened, a government report

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The number of mammography centers fell by 538, or 6 percent, over the three years, the Government Accountability Office said. While the remaining 8,768 centers can meet the need in most parts of the country, women in some counties had to wait a long time or travel a long distance to be screened, the report said.

"Lengthy travel distances may especially pose an access barrier for medically underserved women," said the report by the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress. Uninsured and poor women have lower-than-average mammography screening rates.

The report said 117 counties around the country lost more than a quarter of their mammography machines and that one in four counties had no machines at all. Financial concerns, equipment problems and staffing shortages were cited as reasons given by managers who closed centers.

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