To understand much of what we're doing with respect to cancer research, you'd need a graduate degree in microbiology or biochemistry.

But to understand how well our educational programs and service resources help both patients and their families, simply talk to one out of every 100 Americans who are part of our volunteer program. Or talk to one of the 3 million who've survived cancer.

The battle isn't over but we are winning.

Please support the American Cancer Society.

/COMMENTARY

THE MONEY GENE

NEW YORK, April 1, 2001—News leaked today from the human genome mapping project is rocking the financial district from Wall Street to Skid Row. The facts are vague, but no one close to the story seems to question the underlying truth...or its implications.

As pieced together by biotech finance reporters, the chronology looks something like this:

Since the human genome mapping project began, the avid probers have announced almost weekly the discovery of new genes that cause undesirable human traits—both physical and behavioral, from manic depression and senility to alcoholism and obesity. But now comes word that a group of researchers in Britain has identified *the* gene that determines financial genius and success. The scientists had obtained DNA from individuals representing three generations of Rothschilds: a lucky choice of probes (hats off to the Huntington's success) led them to the gene, called—of course—gene £££.

Simultaneously, a group at Rockefeller University was examining DNA from several generations of the Rockefeller family. They, too, claim to have identified what appears to be the identical gene. Not unexpectedly, they called theirs \$\$\$\$. The sequence of bases that defines gene \$\$\$ was found in all family members save two, whom the family declined to identify (but immediately disinherited).

The two research groups agree in their brief announcements (details of which will appear in the next issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*) that both gene £££ and gene \$\$\$ are situated near one end of the X-chromosome. They insist, however, that it does not map to band Xq27 which, as some astute observers were quick to point out, would link it to mental retardation. So far, in quite a large sampling, only two alleles have been detected by the groups—allele *fss* (financial success and security) and allele *ffb* (financial failure and bankruptcy). It appears that *fss* is dominant to *ffb*, but further studies are necessary to determine possible epistatic interactions and the degree of variable expressivity.

Understandably, the investment and finance industries have been stunned by this news. Should investment firms begin to screen current and potential employees for gene \$\$\$? Would Harvard and Stanford require that MBA applicants be genetically admissible? And what of our multimillionaires? Who among them would risk being tested? To be found lacking in gene \$\$\$ might prove a stigma that no amount of hard work could overcome. The whole world would know who had simply inherited wealth and who had inherited the ability to *create* wealth. How trivial the decision to be tested for AIDS or for Huntington's chorea seems in comparison!

The women's movement immediately took out a full page ad in the *New York Times* to alert their sisters to the implications of a sex-linked gene \$\$\$\$. Finally science had proved what they always knew: mothers contribute infinitely more to the success of their sons than do fathers (after all, male progeny receive their X chromosome from their mothers). The ad went on to point out that women carry two copies of the gene; if both a woman's alleles are *fss*, it stands to reason that she is worth (they didn't actually say twice as much) more. And while the ad acknowledged Mary Lyon's work on X-inactivation, it was quick to point out that recent studies showed that not all genes were turned off on an inactive X chromosome.

It was also rumored that some biotech companies had already attached gene \$\$\$ to tungsten particles (microprojectiles, as they are called) and were ready to shotgun the DNA into cells. If multiple copies of gene \$\$\$ were shotgunned into human ova, which were then fertilized *in vitro* and implanted into a receptive uterus—who could predict the financial consequences?

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