

WEB WATCH

Genetic association database

- <http://geneticassociation.db.nih.gov>

The genetic association database (GAD) is a developing web resource that has the potential to become a valuable community tool.

GAD aims to fulfill the role of an internet archive of association studies in humans: a standardized tool for viewing the growing amount of data on human polymorphism through the prism of case-control studies. Thanks to the recent efforts of the GAD team there has been an increase of more than 300% in the database content and its search capabilities have also been upgraded. The vast majority of the more than 5,000 studies that are in the database have been entered by the team themselves.

But, to survive and thrive, GAD will require greater input from the community. The GAD team encourages geneticists to submit the records of published association studies, all of which are reviewed before inclusion in the archive.

The search capabilities that GAD offers the user would certainly make the database very useful should it become the standard repository for the results of genetic association studies. Searches by gene, disease, polymorphism, chromosomal location and reference are all possible. Linking to relevant records in independent databases, such as HapMap, SNPper and LocusLink, adds to the site functionality. However, one flaw with the current version of GAD is the lack of an easy way for the user to download multiple database records for local use.

GAD's ultimate success will depend on how enthusiastically the community embraces it in its twin roles as archive and tool. Further improvements to its functionality and perhaps innovations that encourage community engagement might hold the key to its future.

Nick Campbell