

In the news

PERSONAL GENOME — ANOTHER FIRST FOR WATSON

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ABC News online: <http://abc-news.go.com>

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With his contribution to solving the structure of DNA in the 1950s, James Watson has amply secured his legendary status in genetics. In another historical moment, Watson has become the first person to have their entire genome sequenced for less than US\$1 million.

'Project Jim' was a collaboration between a biotechnology firm, 454 Life Sciences, and researchers at the Baylor College of Medicine. "I'm thrilled," said the DNA pioneer as the project culminated with the presentation of his genome sequence (*Scientific American*, 1 June 2007).

The project was part of an attempt to secure the \$10 million X prize, which will go to the first team to sequence 100 human genomes within 10 days. In a press release, Richard Gibbs, director of Baylor's Human Genome Sequencing Center, compared the achievement with the Human Genome Project, which took more than 10 years to complete: "Today, we give James Watson a DVD containing his personal genome — a project completed in only two months. It demonstrates how far sequencing technology has come in a short time."

Watson's comments highlight some complexities of having personal genomic information: "You can imagine a family who won't let someone marry their daughter until they examined her prospective husband's genome. You'll want to know what your mate is going to have," (*The New York Times*, 3 June 2007). His wish to have some aspects of his genomic identity kept from him also highlight some concerns: "Since we can't really do much about Alzheimer's, I didn't want to know whether I was at risk," he said, referring to the request that his status for one variant that predisposes to the disease was kept under wraps (*ABC News Online*, 2 June 2007).

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