

CITY & NATION

Professors examine DNA chains linked to diseases

A research team is looking for the genetic cause of myotonic dystrophy and fragile-X syndrome.

By Eleanor Colvin THE BATTALION

WASHINGTON (AP) - Put on

"Mrs. Clinton has responded" to

In reply, D'Amato said the panel

Two Texas A&M professors are conducting DNA research that could lead to the prevention of certain hereditary human disease

Dr. Robert Wells, director of the Center for Genome Research at the Texas A&M Institute of Biosciences and Technology in Houston, and Dr. Richard Sinden, an associate biochemistry/biophysics professor, are part of a research team that received a \$2.6 million grant last semester to study DNA disorders that influence mental retardation.

The A&M professors will work with researchers from Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas Medical Center at Galve-ston on the five-year DNA project funded by the National Institute of Health.

The researchers are looking for the genetic cause of unstable DNA chains linked to at least 12 disease

The team will attempt to prevent the genetic passage of these chains, since the diseases they cause worsen as they are passed from one generation to the next.

DNA chains are composed of threebase sequences. Continuous repetition of certain base patterns is abnormal and results in diseases such as myotonic dystrophy, Huntington's disease and fragile-X syndrome, the second leading cause of Down's syndrome.

All of these diseases are hereditary, and most are characterized by mental retardation and loss of muscle control.

"These DNA strands are a type of mutation that had never been seen before 1991," Sinden said. "It

seems individual to humans only, and we want know why.

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"We hope by understanding the cause we design strategies to prevent its occurrence. Sinden said the research partnership will crease resources and positively influence results

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mutation that had never been seen before 1991."

Dr. Richard Sind associate biochemistry/ biophysics proj

"As a group, we can address issues better the individuals could," he said. "The DNA expert that our (A&M) labs have can be better utilized with access to facilities at Baylor and the med center," Sinden said.

Wells, the research team leader, said in an Ass ciation of Former Students newsletter that the mo ey awarded for this project was invested wisely.

The researchers are focusing on critical issue pertaining to devastating neuromuscular and neurodegenerative diseases," he said.

Dr. David Nelson, an associate professor of mo cular and human genetics at Baylor College Sectoreses Medicine, studies the causes of DNA instabi ty, particularly fragile-X syndrome.

"Understanding the basis of the disorders is important for the enti field of genetics," Nelson said. "I worked with fragile-X sin 1989. It was the first of the diseases to be identifi and occurs frequently." Nelson said his goals beyond finding cures; hopes to generate further que

tions and research topics. "I would love to use this resea constructively to find a drug to st the passage of genetic diseases," said. "However, I think in terms of evol tionary parameters. What are some of the other consequences affecting humans an higher primates?"

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