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Chromosome 13: unlucky for genes?

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Researchers from the [Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute](#) have completed a detailed study of 98.3% of the sequence of human chromosome 13. The analysis - published in [Nature](#) - shows that there are only 633 genes in this sequence - fewer than on chromosome 22, which is less than half the size of chromosome 13.

Recently developed tools and databases allowed the team to look deeper into non-coding regions to find microRNA genes, which are thought to be involved in gene regulation.

Andy Dunham, leader of the team at The Sanger Institute, said: "Chromosome 13 has a dramatic genomic landscape, in the centre of which is a huge 'desert' of only 47 genes. Normally we would expect about 180 genes in such a region of DNA."

Much remains to be uncovered: there are regions on chromosome 13 that appear to play an important role in leukaemias and lymphomas, but the genes involved have not yet been identified from the sequence - although chromosome 13 does include the well-known *BRCA2* breast-cancer predisposition gene.

References

1. Sanger Institute , [<http://www.sanger.ac.uk>]
2. *Nature*, [<http://www.nature.com>]