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William Wells

Email: wells@biotext.com

There is **more variation** in the rate of protein evolution than is expected by chance, although this variation is **not** caused by slower evolution of essential genes. In the 19 October *Nature* Williams and Hurst report that one determinant of evolution rates is gene position: the proteins of linked genes evolve at similar rates (*Nature* 2000, **407**:900-903). The major cause of this phenomenon does not seem to be varying concentrations of mutation-sensitive CpG dinucleotides. The real cause may be the clustering of genes of comparable function, or the variation in recombination frequencies at different chromosomal sites.

References

1. Mammalian gene evolution: nucleotide sequence divergence between mouse and rat.
2. Do essential genes evolve slowly?
3. *Nature*, [<http://www.nature.com/nature/>]

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