

## Gene link for cholesterol

Researchers have identified a protein that plays a key role in the absorption of cholesterol in the gut. Once a person digests cholesterol, genetics play a large part in how the fatty substance is regulated throughout the body. High concentrations of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) circulating in the blood are a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Although the cause for high LDL-C levels is in great part due to genetic variation, large-scale analyses have only revealed a tiny portion of the genes responsible. A variant of the gene, LIMA1, was associated with increased levels of cholesterol. Further investigation revealed that the gene variant is rare across various populations, and that it creates a truncated protein. Mice lacking LIMA1 had significantly lower cholesterol uptake (about 28% less) in the gut than in litter mates that did express the gene. The study appears in the latest issue of the journal, *Science*.

At around 2 a.m. on May 17 morning, a grievously sick Mohammed Salih, a 28-year-old architect from Kerala's Perambra town, was rushed by his family to

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