GENETICS

A RETRO TRIO STUDY

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Nature News writes about a genetic study in Chinese families

> The study also identified some new links. For example, mothers with higher levels of bile acid had shorter babies. Clifton says the analysis falls short of establishing causality but offers leads for further research.

I wonder about the title “The Born in Guangzhou Cohort Study enables generational genetic discoveries” which is more promotional than informational. I wonder also about the geopolitical statement as the map includes also Taiwan (with zero observations, as found also in a previous Cell paper).

And well this is certainly not the first family study in China (see the halted research of Scott Weiss just before he went into vitamin lobbying).

It is also not any new information that mothers with higher levels of bile acid have shorter babies. Did neither interviewer nor interview partner ever hear of intrahepatic cholestasis during pregnancy that is leading to multiple adverse perinatal outcomes?
Cholestasis is leading to preterm birth, which is leading to LBW (by an OR of 2) and also to shorter babies. Without any preregistration and any replication study included, it is difficult to make any conclusion of “leads for further research”. The bile acid result may be a regional artifact if it is only found in one region – basically like in the farming studies.

Neither are numbers in this study as large as the Nature News piece wants us to believe, I think that 332 trios is only an average study size.