

## Gene that reduces 'bad cholesterol' identified

Swedish scientists have identified a gene that reduces levels of bad cholesterol and combats atherosclerosis, a condition brought about by thickening of inner walls of arteries carrying blood to the heart.

In a new study on mice, Karolinska Institutet researchers have shown that the accumulation of the plaque that causes myocardial infarction and stroke can be prevented if levels of the 'bad' LDL cholesterol are reduced before atherosclerotic plaque has progressed beyond a particular point.

The group has also identified a network of 37 genes that lowers levels of blood cholesterol and brings about beneficial effect, reports ScienceDaily.

'Previously, much atherosclerosis research was focussed on identifying ways to stabilise the most dangerous plaques in order to prevent them rupturing and causing myocardial infarction or stroke,' said Johan Bjorkegren of the Institutet, who has led the study. 'Our discovery means that we can now target the actual development of dangerous plaques.'

Rather than covering individual vessel wall genes, their discovery encompasses a network of genes, and one that explains their mutual interaction. It is on account of years of network algorithm development under Jesper Tegner, professor of computational biology, that the discovery of gene networks has been made possible.

'The time when individual genes or gene pathways were thought to explain the development of complex common diseases, such as atherosclerosis, is past,' says Bjorkegren. 'We now have enough tools and knowledge of system biology to take on the total complexity of these diseases.'

( © IANS / India eNews)