Canine genome is studied in Britain

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Some dog breeds are more susceptible to particular diseases than others and British scientists want to identify their genetic predisposition.

Researchers at Imperial College London reportedly are close to understanding dogs' underlying genetic predisposition to diseases. Since the canine genome is very similar to the human genome, the research might lead to healthier humans, as well as healthier dogs.

The scientists are using data from the extensive breed records of the United Kingdom Kennel Club, Britain's premier register of purebred dogs. The records and swab samples from dogs' mouths will be used to identify the differences and similarities of DNA sequences in diseased and healthy dogs.

Pedigree records will be used to improve the accuracy of the analyses on the genetic data.

Professor David Balding, the team's lead researcher at Imperial College London, said, "If we can understand these important genes we will be able to design better nutrition and veterinary drugs for dogs."

The research is featured in the July issue of Business, the quarterly magazine of Britain's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.