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SCIENCE IN THE NEWS WEEKLY

Statins Reduce Heart Risks Even in Healthy People

The annual meeting of the American Heart Association in New Orleans generated a number of headlines last week. A study involving nearly 18,000 patients suggested that cholesterol-lowering statin drugs can even help those with normal cholesterol greatly reduce their risk for heart attacks, stroke and death. Other studies found that old age should not be considered a barrier to heart surgery and that same-sex heart transplants have better outcomes. Meanwhile, researchers reported that high blood pressure claims the lives of nearly 8,000 black Americans each year, and that the arteries of some obese children in the U.S. resemble those of 45-year-olds.

In other news, the *New York Times* looked at developments in genetic research through a series of articles. Among other things, researchers are finding that the definition of what constitutes a gene is up for grabs. Large-scale studies of DNA are causing scientists to rethink the very nature of genes.

In a related development, researchers reported that two large-scale genetic analyses have turned up a trio of new sites associated with autism. The work was presented at a meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics in Philadelphia.

A new theory is emerging that war is not only as ancient as humankind, but may also have played an integral role in our evolution. Research suggests that the cooperative skills developed by effective warriors may have evolved into the modern ability to work toward a common goal.

And the *New Yorker* looked at efforts to trace the roots of psychopathy. Experts say the condition of moral emptiness may affect up to 25 percent of the North American prison population, and is believed by some psychologists to exist in 1 percent of the general adult male population.

You can find this online at <http://www.americanscientist.org/science/pub/statins-reduce-heart-risks-even-in-healthy-people>
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