



## **Philadelphia Inquirer Profiles Research on 'Junk DNA'**

*American Health Line*

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The Philadelphia Inquirer on Thursday profiled geneticist Haig Kazazian, a geneticist at the University of Pennsylvania who last month received the Allen Award from the **American Society of Human Genetics** for his work with "junk DNA" – genetic material found in human cells that appears to have no purpose. According to the Inquirer, genes account for 1% to 2% of human DNA, and introns – "stretches of code that are spliced out when it's time to transcribe the genes into proteins" – account for about one-third of the other 98%; junk DNA accounts for the remainder. During his research on hemophilia in boys at Johns Hopkins University, Kazazian found that transposable elements – part of a specific category of the junk DNA with the ability to "act like a virus, copying themselves and jumping to new parts of the genetic code" – can cause cases of hemophilia, muscular dystrophy, and several other genetic disorders, the Inquirer reports.

Kazazian, who served as director of the genetics department at UPenn from 1994 to 2006, has begun to study whether transposable elements can increase risks for cancer, neurodegenerative diseases and other conditions (Flam, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12/18).