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Naseem Baloch, volunteer at the China-Pakistan Fraternity Emergency Care Center

Older dads lift odds of high myopia

Researchers find link to mutation in gene that causes nearsightedness

By ZHOU WENTING
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The older a father is, the higher the possibility his child will suffer from early-onset high myopia due to a mutation in a gene, Chinese scientists found.

It is the first causal gene that has been proven, through complete animal model tests, to lead to high myopia, nearsightedness of -6.00 diopters, said Jin Zibing, one of the leading researchers on a team from Wenzhou Medical University in Zhejiang province.

The gene is mainly expressed in the eye's ciliary body and neural retina, which may offer key insight into future medical treatment and prevention of high myopia, the cause of which remains unclear, Jin said.

“Through our research we speculated that the ciliary body and neural retina are probably the root place where high myopia happens, which may help future treatment to be more accurately directed,” he said.

On Saturday, the China Medicinal Biotech Association and the journal Chinese Medicinal Biotechnology listed the team's research result as one of last year's top 10 progresses in the medical biotechnology field in China.

In May, a paper about their discovery was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States.

Jin, also an ophthalmologist at the Eye Hospital at Wenzhou Medical University, said the research started with

the collection of patient samples to find out possible reasons for early-onset high myopia among children under 6 years old.

“Preschool children encounter fewer risks from environmental pressures. We propose that the condition of early-onset high myopia is driven by genetic predisposition more than environmental factors,” he said.

Jin said the team found 18 families where the parents did not have myopia but a child younger than 6 did. They conducted gene sequencing and found that a mutation had occurred in the child's BSG gene, but not in those of the parents.

“Interestingly we found in these cases the fathers' reproductive ages are relatively old. And for most of the 12 families who have two children, the elder child did not suffer myopia while the younger one had high myopia,” Jin said.

In lab tests, mice showed lengthened eye axis when the mutated gene was knocked in, manifesting symptoms of nearsightedness, and it proved their assumption.

Myopia is the most common ocular disease and uncorrected myopia is the leading cause of vision impairment worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

Jin said the team now plans to conduct the study with a larger sample size.

“We also want to figure out whether early-onset high myopia is related to in vitro fertilization, which is gaining in popularity when some couples of advanced reproductive age are eager to have a second child,” Jin said.

Medical team keeps Pakistani kids healthy

By CHENG SI
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Fifteen students from the China-Pakistan Government Primary School Faqeer Colony in Gwadar, Pakistan, received free health checkups at the Fraternity Emergency Care Center on Wednesday morning, local time.

The checkup was part of a health project initiated by the Chinese Red Cross foreign aid medical team since they arrived in Gwadar on Sept 22.

The 15 children, aged 10 to 14, followed a checklist including height, weight, eyesight, cardiogram and blood examination.

The checkup lists, printed with their personal information and photos, are designed and made by the team members to facilitate the children's health records.

Wu Gang, leader of the aid medical team, said that the children will be treated if any disease is diagnosed. Records will also be documented to secure them a healthier future.

“It is the first time they have received a physical examination since they were born,” said Naseem Baloch, a volunteer at the Fraternity Emergency Care Center. “Their health condition may be not good. But we now

have a medical team that offers assistance to us.”

“It is what we urgently need. I hope that these kids can receive regular health checkups in the future if possible,” he said.

The medical staff also received five patients when conducting health checkups for the children. Gatekeepers of the center serve as translators when the patients cannot speak English.

The Chinese Red Cross foreign aid medical team in Gwadar, consisting of 12 members from Huashan Hospital of Fudan University and the Beijing branch of the Red Cross, is dispatched by National Health and Family Planning Commission and Red Cross Society of China in 2017.

Stationed at the China-Pakistan Fraternity Emergency Care Center, they will offer medical services to Chinese in Gwadar and local residents in their two-year term of service.

Training will also be offered to Pakistani medical staff during these two years.

The China-Pakistan Fraternity Emergency Care Center, which finishes on May 7, received funding of 10 million yuan (\$1.55 million) from the Red Cross Society of China.

Chen Juan contributed to this story.

Soccer in the snow



Young soccer players take part in a match in the finals of a campus soccer league in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on Thursday. More than 380 players competed in the finals, and over 20,000 students from more than 2,000 schools in the province played in the league matches that started in October. ZHANG SHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

New train services to slash travel time between Chongqing and Guiyang

By LUO WANGSHU
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A new railway line will cut the travel time between the southwestern municipality of Chongqing and Guiyang, Guizhou province, national railway operator China Railway Corp said on Thursday.

The 347-kilometer railway will start operation on Jan 25, ahead of this year's Spring Festival travel rush, and will run at 200 km per hour.

Some 132 train services will be arranged initially.

The new railway connects the Lanzhou-Chongqing line and the Guiyang-Guangzhou high-speed railway.

It will cut travel time between Chongqing and Guiyang to 2 hours from 9 hours, between Chongqing and Guangzhou to 7 hours from 12 hours, and between Chongqing and Kunming to



4 hours 40 minutes from 19 hours.

“It is part of an important railway network linking China's northwestern, southwestern and southern areas,” CRC said in a statement.

“The new railway greatly reduces the travel time between Chongqing and Guiyang and improves regional transport structure ... boosting people-to-people exchanges and trade between southwestern, northwestern and the Pearl River Delta areas. It is

132
train services

will be arranged initially for the 347-kilometer railway linking Chongqing with Guiyang in Guizhou province. It will cut travel time between the two cities to 2 hours from 9 hours.

important to build the south gateway from Chongqing and Chengdu, and relieve pressure during the Spring Festival travel rush,” it said.

Chongqing and Sichuan province are major sources of migrant workers, and Guangzhou, the pioneer city for China's economic reform since 1978, attracts ambitious migrants from all over the country.

During the Spring Festival, many migrant workers will return home for family reunions.

The rail lines from Guangzhou to Chongqing and Sichuan province are always busy during the travel rush, and tickets are in great demand.

The new railway will offer thousands of migrant workers in Guangzhou an alternative route.

The Spring Festival falls on Feb 16 this year. The 40-day travel rush will begin on Feb 1 and end on March 12.

Train trips are expected to top 389 million during the period, up 8.8 percent year-on-year, according to the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic planner.

About 2.98 billion trips are expected to be made during the travel rush, the commission said.

Tunnel completed for Sichuan-Tibet Railway

By DAQIONG in Lhasa
and ZHANG YI in Beijing

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway's first tunnel — that runs more than 16 kilometers along the canyon area of the plateau — managed to cut through on Wednesday under extremely high temperatures, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The 16.4-km Samdrubling Tunnel in Sangri county of the Tibet autonomous region, which passes through the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon, is an important section on the railway that will link Lhasa and Chengdu, according to China Railway Corp.

More than 1,200 workers had toiled on the project since December 2014. They had to overcome many difficulties and dangers, including rock bursts — violent and spontaneous fracturing of the rock.

The highest air temperature within the tunnel was 56 C. Workers could not stay for more than two hours in the tunnel, and in order to cool it down a wind machine, water system and ice blocks were set up, Zhu Xuren, manager of the



Construction workers celebrate the completion of the Samdrubling Tunnel, part of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway, in Sangri county, Tibet autonomous region, on Wednesday. JOGO / XINHUA



16.4 km

Length of the Samdrubling Tunnel, part of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway. More than 1,200 workers had toiled on the project since 2014.

project from China Railway No 5 Engineering Group Co, told Xinhua.

The rock burst zone in the tunnel covered 9.5 km and rock outbursts happened

about 16,000 times during the construction, Li Chuanghai, an engineer of the project, told Xinhua.

“Like earthquakes, the rock bursts happened without any

signs at all. The rock slices or rock pieces shoot off in a certain direction or collapse suddenly,” worker Cheng Yingbin told Xinhua.

Working deep underground also increased the difficulty of construction. Emergency rescue stations were deployed to guarantee safety.

Yang Hao, a railway professor at Beijing Jiaotong University, said that the tunnel cut through a complicated geographical area of the Tibetan Plateau and needed to be carried out extremely carefully.

“It is a very challenging project for railway construction in China. The tunnel is quite long, so the ventilation and lighting systems are also very important to guarantee safety,” Yang said.

As the second railway connecting Tibet with the rest of the country, the Sichuan-Tibet Railway is expected to be completed in 2025, and will reduce the travel time from Chengdu to Lhasa to about 13 hours from about 36 hours.

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Briefly

BEIJING 71,644 punished for violations

A total of 71,644 people were punished in 2017 for violating the Party's eight-point frugality code, according to the top anti-graft body. A total of 10,672 people were punished for 7,594 violations against the frugality code in December 2017, according to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Of the 7,594 cases, 2,187 were related to unauthorized issuing of subsidies or welfare, 1,272 were related to sending or accepting gifts or money, 1,229 were related to using public funds for banquets, and 1,144 were related to unauthorized use of official cars.

Railway police nab 48,106 fugitives

China's railway police captured 48,106 fugitives in 2017, 13.4 percent more than 2016, according to a police statement on Wednesday. The railway police stepped up its interrogation and examination of suspected passengers, and improved the information network and emergency response system in 2017, the statement said. In 2017, a total of 3.04 billion passenger trips were made on railways, up 9.6 percent year-on-year.

HUBEI Fishing banned in 83 reserves

Hubei province will permanently ban fishing in 83 nature reserves in the Yangtze basin this year to restore the ecosystem of the river. The ban has already been implemented in 10 aquatic nature reserves as of Jan 1, and the others will be added by the end of 2018, according to the provincial fisheries department. The department has set up inspection teams to oversee the implementation of the ban.

ZHEJIANG 26 suspects held over hacking

Police have detained 26 members of a hacking group, which allegedly obtained the top listing on search engine Baidu for a counterfeit cigarette seller. In May, police in Yongjia county found a suspect's business was listed on the top of Baidu's search results for online cigarette shops. The suspect, surnamed Zhan, had allegedly paid an internet firm in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, to “obtain” the top spot. The Yangzhou Ganyou Internet Technology Co is suspected of hacking into Baidu's background data and interfering with its search results. After a seven-month investigation, police detained 26 suspects and shut down 80 servers.

HENAN City on highest air pollution alert

Zhengzhou, a city chronically plagued by smog, will raise the alert for air pollution to the highest level on Friday, local authorities announced on Thursday. The red alert will be effective starting on Friday, with no specific time to lift the warning. Local environmental authorities forecast heavy pollution to persist until Tuesday. Primary schools and kindergartens across the city have been ordered to close on Friday.