

Factor XI mutation and the origin of Ashkenazi Jews

Zadra et al.¹ report that both type II and type III mutations of coagulation factor XI are present among Italians at low but approximately equal proportions. In spite of the fact that they have not conducted a linkage disequilibrium analysis they conclude that “haplotype analysis demonstrated the Jewish origin of both the type II and type III mutations” and that “gene flow was responsible for the diffusion of these mutations among Italians”.

A more likely scenario is that the mutations originated in the Italian population, similarly to the non-Jewish European origin of the common Ashkenazi Gaucher mutation, N370S.² This coincides with the postulated origin of Ashkenazi Jews in Italy,^{3,4} and with the ancient Roman Jewish community being mainly a community of proselytes.⁵⁻⁸ Genetic distance analyses also demonstrate the resemblance between the major Ashkenazi population, Eastern European Jews, and Italians.⁹⁻¹¹

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