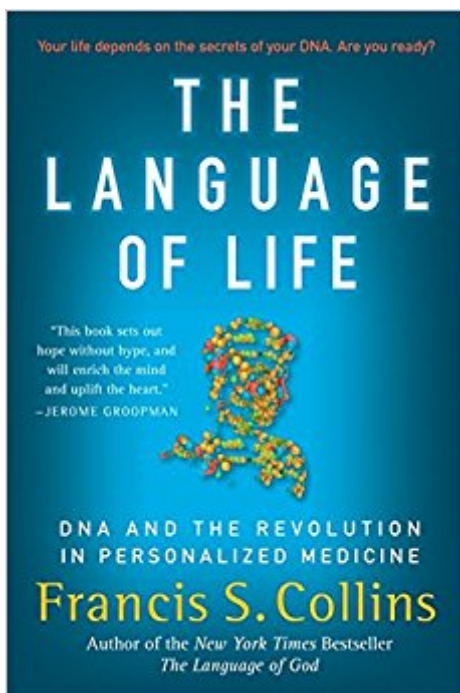


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# The Language Of Life: DNA And The Revolution In Personalized Medicine



## Synopsis

"His groundbreaking work has changed the very ways we consider our health and examine disease." —Barack Obama From Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institute of Health, 2007 recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and 15-year head of the Human Genome Project, comes one of the most important medical books of the year: *The Language of Life*. With accessible, insightful prose, Dr. Collins describes the medical, scientific, and genetic revolution that is currently unlocking the secrets of "personalized medicine" and offers practical advice on how to utilize these discoveries for you and your family, as current and future health and well-being. In the words of Dr. Jerome Groopman (*How Doctors Think*), *The Language of Life* "sets out hope without hype, and will enrich the mind and uplift the heart."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. A medical revolution is upon us and bestselling author Collins (*The Language of God*), director of the National Institutes of Health, does a fabulous job of explaining its dimensions. Our knowledge of the genetic basis for disease has increased exponentially in recent years, and we are now able to understand and treat diseases at the molecular level with personalized care based on an individual's genetic makeup. Collins presents cutting-edge science for lay readers who want to take control of their medical lives. In an enjoyable form, he

discusses cancer, obesity, aging, racial differences, and a host of other concerns. Most fascinating is the way Collins discusses the medical advances currently in place and those soon to come that are directly attributable to the federal government's Human Genome Project, headed by Collins, and which mapped the entire human genome. Collins is also not shy about taking on large political issues. He points out problems with our current health-care system, discusses stem-cell research, and in a cogent commentary, recommends with caveats direct-to-consumer DNA testing. By using case studies throughout, he does a superb job of humanizing a complex scientific and medical subject. Illus. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Currently chief of the National Institutes of Health, Collins directs this work to those considering researching their double helix to assess their risk for hereditary diseases. Providing an idea of how risks are reckoned, ranging from certainty to probabilities, Collins gives a general explanation of both the Mendelian idea of dominant and recessive genes and the molecular biology of DNA. Collins's work is then organized by various diseases such as cancer, on which a vista of diagnostic opportunity has opened due to the decoding of the human genome (Collins was the leader of the government's decoding effort). With his prose reflecting a palpable excitement at the prospects of this new form of medicine, which he rates as nothing less than a revolution in human health, Collins combines uplifting cases of direly afflicted people who benefited from knowledge gained by genetic screening, with exhortation of the reader to learn about and take advantage of existing and developing techniques of genetic screening. Expect significant patron interest in Collins's combination of science and practical information. --Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is an easy read that assumes very little science background from the readers. That's fine, but for such an eminent scientist and administrator as Dr. Collins, I had hoped for more. If not science, then how about more about how the NIH works, how research is done, how drugs are approved...??? I enjoyed the book but I wanted more. Dr. Collins made the very important point that medicine is now PERSONALIZED based on the patient's specific genetic make-up. He explained how our genes affect how we react to any kind of medical treatment. That's an extremely important point. I would have liked him to further emphasize and explain that personalizing medicine is a HUGE shift in how doctors must treat patients, and how drug companies must create and test new drugs. I had read Craig Venter's biography (A Life Decoded). In addition to biographical information,

it talked about what he did when he worked for the NIH, mentioning Dr. Collins, the 'politics' of biomedical research, intellectual property rights, funding and running a bio-med startup... of course he outlined the basics of genetics, gave easy-to-understand explanations of his unique way to sequence the human genome, explained his way of doing drug research. Venter gave a lot more information in his biography than Dr. Collins did in this science book, both books are about the same length.

Outstanding and accessible book that fleshes out the history of human genetics in the recent past, much of which was firsthand as Dr. Collins has a large role to play in this story. This is not a history though, but rather gleans from some big revelations and technological developments over the past three decades the overarching themes that we now know as personalized medicine (or even more recently, precision medicine). Delving into a wealth of data and with remarkable clarity, Collins demonstrates the absolute necessity for medicine to move into new paradigms that harness personalized medicine. In a fairly salient moment of the book, Collins sends his DNA to three genotyping companies (23andme, Decode, and Navigenics) and gets three different answers as to his chances of getting prostate cancer. He then sifts through the meaning of these predictions and clearly explains why the current state of affairs needs so much work. Future doctors, policy makers, or patients would do well to read and re-read this book.

Dr. Francis Collins is a genius in the field of Science. He is also a dedicated Christian. He headed the NIH project in about 2002, when they named to human genomes. His knowledge of DNA and biology, and science in general, has enriched his Christian faith. He does a great job of bringing faith and science together. He explains that the radicals in each field, often do not "hear" the information from the other. If God is creator of everything; "Truth", by any label is still "Truth". Any contradiction between science and faith is in the narrow preceptions of man. I have since read, "The Language of DNA" and the "The Language of Science and Faith", also by Collins. For those that are open to "seeing" how faith and science compliment one another, these books are a must.

This is an excellent read! Francis Collins does an outstanding job at presenting complex DNA material in a simplified way for any student or learner in any discipline or field of expertise. Although Collins is a world-class scientist, He does not use technical language, but rather presents a clear case for personalized medicine in common language. In essence, Collins demonstrates that the days are coming when individual DNA analysis to determine predispositions towards certain

illnesses will be as common as a physical check-up. In other words, DNA screening will be used to help determine the likelihood of someone falling victim to future diseases and sicknesses. In layman terms, the days are coming when you will have the option to know if you are prone toward cancer, heart disease, diabetes, etc. Francis Collins suggests that future DNA analysis may be used for certain preventative measures. While some may not have an interest in knowing their potential future health condition (*que sera sera*), others will. I, personally, am of the latter mindset. I prefer to know what my potential future holds in terms of health. In this way, I can do my best to prevent certain diseases as a good steward of the body God has given me. I think my wife, children and friends deserve it.

The Language of Life was one of the best-written books I've read on personal genomics and the future of genetic medicine. It is written by Francis Collins, an obvious pioneer in the field, who now has an extremely influential position in American science. The book gives an overview of many of the important genomic advances through Collins' eyes, giving a personal touch on the science. It is very interesting how Collins describes how he has subjected himself to various personal genomic tests and he explains in simple language what they meant to him. In particular, Collins relates many examples of where genetic knowledge is powerful in terms of individual people's livelihood. For instance, he tells the story a woman finding out that her family was afflicted by long Qt interval, which causes sudden death and the way they tried to watch for this (eg home defibrillator) . He tells how genomics is redefining ancestry with a story about a prominent individual that thought he was black but didn't turn out to have much African DNA. There is one small sloppiness that I uncovered in the book: Collin's saying that John Nash won a Nobel for mathematics. (He actually won the prize in economics.)

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