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## **DISEASE RESEARCH**

# **Animals may hold the key to origins**

THE genes of two Australian animals, the kangaroo and the platypus, have been said to uncover the mysterious origins of two debilitating human diseases.

Research by Australian National University scientists is the first to prove two rare genetic conditions evolved in humans more recently than first thought.

The team studied the genes that are abnormal in Prader-Willi Syndrome, a complex disorder which causes learning difficulties and obesity, and Angelman Syndrome, marked by severe mental retardation and inappropriate laughter.

Both diseases are caused by an error in imprinted genes and researchers were able to find the gene in both animals.