

Lincoln may have had rare genetic disease

A California doctor who studies rare ailments said Abraham Lincoln was probably dying of cancer from a rare genetic syndrome at the time he was assassinated.

Cardiologist John G. Sotos of Palo Alto, Calif., said he believed the U.S. Civil War-era president had a genetic abnormality called MEN 2B that could be easily proved through DNA testing, The Washington Post reported Monday.

MEN 2B is short for "multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2B," a subtype of a genetic disease whose sufferers invariably develop cancer in a hormone-producing organ. Nearly every victim of MEN 2B gets cancer of the thyroid gland and about half also get cancer of the adrenal gland.

Sotos said in about half the cases, patients inherit the disease from a parent. There is a chance Lincoln's mother may have had it and it may have been responsible for the death of at least one of Lincoln's four sons, he told the Post.

Sotos planned to publish his diagnosis of Lincoln in a Web-based book, "The Physical Lincoln," and was to outline his findings Wednesday at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

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