Start-up Helix launches the first Genomics App Store for DNA

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Helix, a DNA testing startup has launched an "app store" for genetic code with a number of partners offering tests on its new platform. The company with its launch partners has come up with twenty tests that are powered by Helix's DNA-sequencing technology.

The tests offer insights into health, family planning, ancestry, fitness, nutrition, and also include some fun tests like wine selected based on your DNA. The tests range in cost from around $20 to the hundreds of dollars.

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According to media reports, CEO Robin Thurston noted at the Manhattan launch event for Helix's app store, that anyone who has wondered if he or she is at risk for heart disease, wanted to personalize their workout routine, is thinking about starting a family, and has questioned the ability to process certain foods would find a product of interest. Currently, the online marketplace features products developed by a dozen partners, but according to Thurston, as more come online later this year, Helix will be able to create more detailed user profiles.

Perhaps the biggest unknown for Helix and its partners is how big of a demand there will there be among consumers for genomics-focused products, particularly given the complexity of the information and people's concerns about privacy and discrimination based on DNA data. Currently, the big players in the consumer genomics space are 23andMe, which boasts more than 2 million customers, and genealogy firm AncestryDNA, which as of April had 4 million members.