

Can viruses transfer genetic material between individuals ?

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I read two years ago during the SRAS period, by a japanese scientists, that one of the theories about the origin of viruses was that they were *emitted* by more evolved living beings that would spread their genetic material in the form of DNA chains that would group and form viruses.

Is this still up to date ?

Then, the article also mentionned that some viruses were apt to transfer genetic material between individuals, either from the same species, or from one species to another.

Is this possible ?

Does this mean that anyone's genetic code could be modified by viruses, not only locally (so as to cause cancer etc.) but also as a whole, so as to cause a mutation passed on to the next generation ?

The article also mentionned, regarding SRAS, that among all the infected persons, some were *superspreaders*, i.e. persons that would spread around a far higher amount of virus than the average.

Likewise, are there species where the individuals spread better their genetic material (as suggested in the first paragraph on possible viruses origins) than in other species ? Or in some species, has it been observed that some individuals can spread their genetic material more than other individuals ?

I wondered if this could be a mechanism for genetic evolution, and for competition between species.