

Brain shape development studied

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A Harvard study says visual stimulation turns up genes that shape the brain.

Citing the pioneering work of Nobel Prize-winning Harvard researchers David Hubel and Torsten Wiesel, the new study found that visual stimulus turns up the expression of some genes and turns down the expression of others, somewhat like a conductor cuing the members of an orchestra.

The study also found that during different stages of life in rodents, distinct sets of genes spring into action in response to visual input. The findings are reported in the May issue of *Nature Neuroscience*.

"What we found opens science up to a more global look at genes, from studying one gene at a time to looking at families of genes acting together," said lead author Marta Majdan, a research fellow in neurobiology.

The findings suggest that genetic therapies for neurodegenerative diseases will require more extensive knowledge of molecular pathways and gene interactions to be successful.

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