

Gene with possible link to schizophrenia identified

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Virginia Commonwealth University researchers have identified a gene associated with schizophrenia that could provide further insight about the functional changes that occur on the molecular level in individuals who suffer from it.

The results of the research, led by Xiangning Chen, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychiatry and human genetics in VCU's School of Medicine, and Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D., professor of psychiatry and human genetics in VCU's School of Medicine are reported in the March 1 issue of the journal *Biological Psychiatry*.

"The significance of this article is that it provides evidence that a gene directly involved in apoptosis, or cell death, is associated with schizophrenia. Apoptosis has long been speculated to be involved in schizophrenia, but no gene directly involved in this process was found to be associated with the disease," Chen said.

"If it is confirmed by other researchers, it will better our understanding of the pathophysiology of schizophrenia," he said.

The team studied variants of the gene, MEGF10, in affected and unaffected individuals from Ireland and Northern Ireland and compared the expression of the gene in the postmortem brains of healthy controls, as well as those with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

According to Chen, the team found that some variants of MEGF10 had a

higher frequency in schizophrenia patients than in healthy controls and these variants were associated with higher expression of the gene in the brain of affected subjects.

Collaborating with Chen and Kendler were VCU researchers Xu Wang, Qi Chen, Vernell Williamson, Brion S. Maher, and Edwin van den Oord; F. Anthony O'Neill, with Queens University in Belfast, Northern Ireland; Dermot Walsh with the Health Research Board in Dublin, Ireland.

Source: Virginia Commonwealth University

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