

New way to help schizophrenia sufferers' social skills

September 10 2008

Researchers from the University of Newcastle are investigating a new way to help schizophrenia patients develop their communication and social skills.

PhD student Kathryn McCabe is studying the eye movements of people with schizophrenia to understand better how they view other people's faces.

Ms McCabe said the ability to recognise facial expressions and social clues was impaired in people with schizophrenia.

"For most people this ability is relatively automatic and an essential component of good social and interpersonal communication, but people with schizophrenia struggle to interpret facial displays of emotion," she said.

"This may contribute to the formation of psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions and social withdrawal, and interfere with vocational and educational achievement."

Ms McCabe hopes to determine whether the difficulty in reading facial expression can be changed using remediation training.

"Despite the widespread availability of medication for people with schizophrenia, other treatment options are also needed.

"We have developed a training program that we hope will help people with schizophrenia to participate socially and pick-up on facial clues."

Source: Research Australia

Citation: New way to help schizophrenia sufferers' social skills (2008, September 10) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-09-schizophrenia-social-skills.html>

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