

Indo-Australian study identifies genetic region involved in schizophrenia risk

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A study involving an Indian population has led to an important discovery in schizophrenia genetics.

Scientists at the Schizophrenia Research Foundation in Chennai, India, and UQ's Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research found statistically significant evidence for involvement of a chromosome 1 region in schizophrenia.

This study is based on a long-standing collaboration between Professor Bryan Mowry, QCMHR Executive Director and QIMR Honorary Principal Research Fellow, and Dr Rangaswamy Thara, Director of the Schizophrenia Research Foundation.

For a number of years these research groups have been recruiting and analysing schizophrenia pedigrees from genetically similar Indian castes.

Professor Mowry said the significance of the findings likely reflected the unique features of this particular Indian population.

“Although we have known for decades that genes are important in schizophrenia, identifying specific genes has been hampered by clinical complexity, multiple small-effect genes and environmental interactions,” Professor Mowry said.

“This Indian population offers favourable characteristics for gene identification including a relatively pure clinical presentation, a

negligible rate of comorbid drug and alcohol abuse, ethnic homogeneity and high environmental consistency, each of which may reduce noise in statistical genetic studies of schizophrenia.”

Schizophrenia affects approximately one percent of the world's population and is characterised by disruptions in language, thought, perception, social activity, and volition.

Several previous studies of both Caucasian and Chinese populations have provided modest support for the chromosome 1 region in schizophrenia susceptibility, but the Indo-Australian research is the first to produce convincing results.

The researchers are now conducting detailed investigation into the chromosome 1 region in order to identify specific risk genes and replicate their findings in other populations.

The study was published this month in the prestigious *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

Source: University of Queensland

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