

Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder: Bridging the divide

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Discovering common ground between schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Sufferers of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are being brought together in a major new study to determine the diseases' common genetic causes.

For the first time, sufferers of schizophrenia and [bipolar disorder](#) are being brought together in a major new study investigating the diseases' common genetic causes and manifestations.

UNSW researchers believe the study will challenge the traditional classification of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder as separate diseases.

They hope the results will aid the early detection of a cognitive vulnerability to psychosis in adolescence, facilitating early intervention

and the development of drug treatments that can be personalised according to genotype.

Recent molecular genetic and epidemiological studies in Sweden and the US have suggested that the disorders share some common [genetic susceptibility](#), but the results have not been definitive in determining which [genes](#) are shared and what they code for.

“The international diagnostic manual for the classification of [psychiatric disorders](#) is currently being revised and it’s being considered as to whether schizophrenia and bipolar disorder should be grouped together. It’s very controversial,” said study leader Dr Melissa Green, from UNSW’s School of Psychiatry.

“There’s not been enough evidence so far to support that change - this study will provide good quality evidence on this issue,” she said.

Dr Green and her team will integrate data from genetics, functional neuroimaging, cognitive testing and physiological measurements to pinpoint shared genetic susceptibility to the disorders, which may manifest in common cognitive and frontal brain dysfunctions.

“We’ve spent over 100 years trying to work out what’s causing schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and many people believe that maintaining these conditions as distinct diseases has been holding us back,” Dr Green said.

“Already some medications are shared across the two disorders, and are aimed at treating overt psychotic symptoms. With more information, new drugs could be developed to improve the enduring cognitive deficits as well.”

Dr Green was recently named as an Australian Research Council Future

Fellow, with her project attracting close to \$700,000 funding over four years from the federal government. The study is being conducted in collaboration with researchers at the [Schizophrenia](#) Research Institute, the Black Dog Institute, the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute, and Leiden University, The Netherlands.

Provided by University of New South Wales ([news](#) : [web](#))

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