

Women with schizophrenia to get new treatment option

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(Medical Xpress)—In a world first study, exciting new research has revealed that oestrogen can help treat schizophrenia in previously treatment-resistant women.

Led by Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre (MAPrc) Professor Jayashri Kulkarni, the study is the first large-scale randomised-controlled trial in [women](#) with treatment-resistant schizophrenia.

Conducted over several years, the research was deemed necessary after it

was discovered that a specific focus for women with schizophrenia was lacking, with an urgent need for new treatment approaches.

The study, the largest clinical trial in the world of its type, found that in an eight week, three arm, double blind, placebo-controlled, adjunctive trial of estradiol, women who were given estradiol made better recoveries than those who were given a placebo.

Professor Kulkarni said persistent schizophrenia was common despite advances over the years in antipsychotic drug development, with little of the research focused on women.

"A specific focus for women with schizophrenia is still somewhat lacking and there is a real need to consider the special issues facing women with schizophrenia," Professor Kulkarni said.

"Since we are the pioneers in this area, with the optimal safe dose and delivery of estradiol being explored by our group in earlier [trials](#), we felt this newer trial was necessary in the effective treatment of women with schizophrenia.

"What we found was that adjunctive estradiol treatment has practical use for women who have not responded well to antipsychotic drug treatment previously.

"We also found that due to the fluctuations of estrogen in women and its impact on mental state the premenstrual period, post natal and menopause phases of a woman's life are critical times for mental state changes. A team approach to her treatment is vital to the best health and mental health care outcomes."

Professor Kulkarni said she was excited about the positive results of the study, with trials of selective estrogen receptor modulators representing a

hopeful future direction for schizophrenia research.

"There are many promising newer forms of hormone [treatment](#) that offer great hope in the much-needed area of new, effective treatments for people with persistent [schizophrenia](#) and should be expanded to include men and postmenopausal women."

Provided by Monash University

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