

# Familial depression linked to cognitive performance in offspring

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Depression in prior generations is associated with lower cognitive

performance in offspring, according to a study published online April 19 in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Breda Cullen, Ph.D., from the University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom, and colleagues examined the connections between [familial risk](#) for depression and cognitive performance in four independent cohorts: the Three Generations at High and Low Risk of Depression Followed Longitudinally (TGS) [family](#) study, Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study, National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), and U.K. Biobank. A total of 57,308 participants were included.

The researchers found that family history of depression was mainly associated with lower performance in the memory domain in the TGS, ABCD, and Add Health cohorts (ages 6 to 42 years), and there were indications that this was partly linked to educational and socioeconomic factors. Associations were seen with processing speed, attention, and executive function in the older U.K. Biobank [cohort](#) (ages 44 to 83 years); little evidence was seen for education or socioeconomic influences. Even in participants who had never been depressed, but had a family history, these associations were evident. The largest standardized mean differences in primary analyses were  $-0.55$ ,  $-0.09$ ,  $-0.16$ , and  $-0.10$  in the TGS, ABCD, Add Health, and U.K. Biobank cohorts, respectively. In the polygenic risk score analyses, the results were generally similar.

"Depression in prior generations was associated with lower [cognitive performance](#) in offspring," the authors write. "The next challenge is to elucidate the pathways by which this arises."

One author disclosed financial ties to the publishing industry.

**More information:** Breda Cullen et al, Cognitive Function in People

With Familial Risk of Depression, *JAMA Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.0716](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.0716)

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