

Routine brain scanning may improve clinical care for people with psychosis

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Routine brain scanning in people experiencing psychosis could help to identify underlying physical conditions that are causing their symptoms, according to a new study.

Researchers led by Dr. Graham Blackman and Professor Philip McGuire

at the University of Oxford's Department of Psychiatry reviewed the results of more than 1,600 patients with a first episode of psychosis who had undergone an MRI brain scan.

They found that around 6% of patients had a scan abnormality which led to a different diagnosis or a change to their clinical care. The paper, "Prevalence of neuroradiological abnormalities in first episode psychosis," has been published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Dr. Blackman, an NIHR (National Institute for Health and Care Research) clinical lecturer at the university, says, "Patients presenting with psychosis may have another [physical illness](#) or condition causing their symptoms that can be identified using MRI scanning. A failure to detect these causes at an early stage can have serious consequences, such as a delay in providing the appropriate treatment. Our findings suggest that MRI scans should be considered as part of the initial assessment of all people with first-episode psychosis to ensure that they get the right diagnosis and the right treatment."

Although it is considered good practice to carry out a brain scan in new patients with psychosis, this is not mandatory. Previously, a NICE Technology Appraisal was unable to recommend scanning in all patients, as at that time it was unclear how common clinically relevant brain abnormalities in people with first-episode psychosis are.

Professor McGuire adds, "We feel that this study addresses a critical knowledge gap in this area by showing that clinically relevant abnormalities occur frequently enough to justify making MRI scanning a routine part of the assessment of people presenting with psychosis for the first time. This new evidence has important implications for [clinical care](#) in psychosis and a review of the NICE guidance in this area would be helpful."

Following these findings, the researchers are now evaluating the utility of offering all people with a first episode of [psychosis](#) at Oxford Health NHS Trust an MRI [brain](#) scan as part of their initial clinical assessment.

More information: Graham Blackman et al, Prevalence of Neuroradiological Abnormalities in First-Episode Psychosis, *JAMA Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.2225](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.2225)

Provided by University of Oxford

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