Gene Activity connected to Schizophrenia

Two new studies have identified genetic activity that appears to be associated with schizophrenia, a serious brain disorder that alters a person's perceptions of reality, emotions and thought processes. Symptoms of the disorder, which affects about 1% of the world's population, typically surface during the late teens and 20s. In this study, Dr. Maria Karayiorgou of Rockefeller University in New York and colleagues identified two genes on chromosome 22—a section of DNA that has previously been linked to schizophrenia—that appeared to play a role in the disease.

In their study, Karayiorgou's team analyzed DNA samples from more than 250 people with schizophrenia, their parents and a group of healthy individuals. The researchers included people with childhood onset schizophrenia, a rare form of the disease that strikes by age 12.

The two genes are PRODH2, which encodes for a common brain enzyme, and DGCR6, a gene that is associated with nervous system development. Certain variations in the PRODH2 seemed to be more common in those with schizophrenia than in others, although the investigators could not rule out nearby DGCR6 as playing a role.

Karayiorgou felt that variation in the genes was over-represented in the patients with schizophrenia compared to the healthy people. More work is needed until we have a genetic profile of variation that could account for the schizophrenia in any given person.

In the second study, Sabine Bahn of the Babraham Institute in Cambridge, UK, and colleagues also identified genes on chromosome 22 that they believe may play a role in schizophrenia.

The team analyzed brain tissue from dead schizophrenia patients and compared them with similar samples from those with other psychiatric disorders.
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