

Gene linked to suicide may predict risk, spark pre-emptive treatment

A gene tied to negative thoughts and impulses may lead to a blood test predicting suicide risk, according to researchers who said such a tool could help prevent a leading cause of death.

Scientists from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore discovered that a mutation to a gene, called SKA2, appeared to prevent the brain from responding normally to stress hormones. An analysis of brain tissue from people who had killed themselves found depleted levels of SKA2.

The finding, published online today in the Journal of Psychiatry, adds to recent genetic discoveries in psychiatry that promise to advance treatment and diagnostics in the field. Suicide is the 10th-leading cause of death in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While there are known risk factors, such as mental illness, drug abuse or distressful life events, there is no consistent way to predict suicide, researchers said.

“We have found a gene that we think could be really important for consistently identifying a range of behaviors from suicidal thoughts to attempts to completions,” Zachary Kaminsky, the lead study author and an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, said in a statement. “With a test like ours, we may be able to stem suicide rates by identifying those people and intervening early enough to head off a catastrophe.”

Read the full, original story: [Blood test for suicide may come from stress gene deficit](#)