

Can identifying 'suicide genes' help predict risk?

No one could have predicted that Oscar-winning comedian Robin Williams would kill himself.

Or could they?

When someone commits suicide, the reaction is often the same: It's disbelief, mixed with a recognition that the signs were all there.

Depression. Maybe talk of ending one's life.

Now, by studying people who think about committing suicide, as well as brains of people who actually did, two groups of genome researchers in the U.S. and Europe are claiming they can use DNA tests to actually predict who will attempt suicide.

While claims for a suicide test remain preliminary, and controversial, a "suicide gene" is not as fanciful as it sounds. The chance that a person takes his or her own life is in fact heritable, and many scientific teams are now involved in broad expeditions across the human genome to locate suicide's biological causes.

Based on such gene research, one startup company, Sundance Diagnostics, based in Boulder, Colorado, says it will begin offering a suicide risk test to doctors next month, but only in connection with patients taking antidepressant drugs like Prozac and Zoloft.

Read the full, original story: Could a genetic test predict the risk for suicide?