

DNA analysis confirms schizophrenia has genetic roots

A paper published [in Nature](#) marks the culmination of a long debate about the genetic basis of a disorder sometimes considered psychiatry's heartland — schizophrenia. No other psychiatric condition has evoked such diverse opinions. Its biological roots have often been denied and, in the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1970s, there was even outright rejection of its existence. The latest paper, from the Schizophrenia Working Group of the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium, reports an analysis of more than 150,000 people and finds more than 100 genetic regions associated with schizophrenia, laying to rest forever the idea that genetics is not an important cause of the illness.

Dispute over schizophrenia's genetic basis has been ferocious. This is hardly surprising given that Swiss psychiatrist Ernst Rüdin — an early proponent of the argument that the condition is a single-gene disorder — advocated the view that people with mental illnesses should not have children, and justified the sterilization and murder of people with schizophrenia. Despite the disease's long and contentious history, by the end of the twentieth century there was consensus that genetic factors were involved. But agreeing that genetics has a part to play is not the same as finding individual genetic regions (loci) that contribute to disease susceptibility. Progress in this arena has been marked by false starts, and by more than 800 genetic associations of dubious value.

Not unreasonably, many would ask why we should be any more confident that the consortium's geneticists have now got it right. The short answer is that the tests for associations between each gene in the human genome and disease are now mature. Since the first genome-wide analyses for schizophrenia emerged in 2009, the size of the studies has increased, as have the numbers of loci associated with the condition.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Schizophrenia: Genesis of a complex disease](#)