

Depression and epilepsy may share same genetic roots

From the time of Hippocrates, physicians have suspected a link between epilepsy and depression. Now, for the first time, scientists at Rutgers University-New Brunswick and Columbia University have found [evidence](#) that seizures and mood disorders such as depression may share the same genetic cause in some people with epilepsy, which may lead to better screening and treatment to improve patients' quality of life.

The scientists studied dozens of unusual families with multiple relatives who had epilepsy, and compared the family members' lifetime prevalence of mood disorders with that of the U.S. population.

They found an increased incidence of mood disorders in persons who suffer from a type of the condition called focal epilepsy, in which seizures begin in just one part of the brain. But mood disorders were not increased in people with generalized epilepsy, in which seizures start on both sides of the brain.

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Seizures in most people with epilepsy can be controlled by drugs and surgery. The fact remains, however, that epilepsy and mood disorders such as depression affect quality of life and increase disability and healthcare costs.

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"A number of genes have been found for epilepsy and understanding if these genes also might be causing depression is important,"[researcher Gary] Heiman said. "In particular, more studies should be done to understand the relationship between focal epilepsy and mood disorders."

[Editor's note: Read [full study](#)]

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