Increased suicide risk linked to 4 gene variants in study

University of Utah Health researchers have identified some genetic factors that may increase a person's risk of dying by suicide, according to the results of a newly published study.

Variants in four genes — known as APH1B, AGBL2, SP110 and SUCLA2 — were identified as being noticeably associated with suicide risk.

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Using the statistical resources of the Utah Population Database, U. researchers studied 43 extended families that, over the course of several generations, exhibited high suicide risk. Gene variants determined to be prevalent in these families were then tested for their frequency in a generalized sample of 1,300 suicides in Utah for which DNA was available.

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U. psychiatry professor Hilary Coon, first author of the paper published in Molecular Psychiatry, said there is considerable value in using suicide data from large extended families across generations, because they share genetic traits but not necessarily environmental factors that can also have an effect on suicidal behavior.

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What it is about the four gene variations that specifically influence a person to be more likely to die by suicide will be much more difficult to discover, compared to the work that went into identifying them in the first place, Coon said.

"There's a lot more work to find out exactly what that mechanism is … that results in a behavioral change," she said.

Read full, original post: University of Utah researchers identify 4 gene variants linked to heightened suicide risk