OCD relief: A genetic-based therapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder could be within reach

[OCD], which affects 1–2% of the population, commonly runs in families, and genes are known to play a large role in determining who develops the disease. "…Evidence from family-based studies supports a genetic contribution to the disorder," the team wrote. But while strongly acting mutations have been hypothesized to exist in OCD, statistically reliable evidence has been difficult to obtain.

…

[A new] analysis identified a strong correlation between OCD and rare mutations, particularly in a gene called SLITRK5 that had been previously linked to OCD in candidate-gene studies. "SLITRK5 is a member of the SLITRK gene family, which influences excitatory and inhibitory synapse formation," the authors wrote. Interestingly, they continued, "Slitrk5-knockout mice have been described as having increased 'OCD-like' behaviors, including elevated anxiety and excessive grooming."

[Author David] Goldstein expects that the new data on SLITRK5 will encourage pharmaceutical companies and translational researchers to develop drugs that target this gene.

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