

Can alcoholism be inherited?

Building off of work done in 2017, a team of researchers led by scientists at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine has identified new genetic variants associated with alcohol dependence in what is the largest genetic study of alcoholism ever done.

The [study](#), published in the [*American Journal of Psychiatry*](#), identified more than a dozen variants associated with “alcohol use disorder,” many of them identified for the first time.

The top hits were near genes that play a role in alcohol metabolism. While there is overlap between alcohol use disorder and alcohol consumption, the researchers did further analysis and found a “distinct genetic architecture” differentiating alcohol abuse from alcohol consumption. And these distinctions will be important for identifying the genetics of addiction, the researchers said.

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Scientists have learned through studies of identical and non-identical twins that alcohol use disorder is heritable, with genetic factors accounting for about half of the risk of alcohol dependence. But finding the genes that influence alcoholism has been challenging. Part of the challenge has been to gather a study that is large enough to detect a genetic signal, said [lead researcher [Prof. Abraham](#)] Palmer.

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