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Biological Psychiatry

Volume 65, Issue 7, 1 April 2009, Pages 556-563

Review

Candidate Endophenotypes for Genetic Studies of Suicidal Behavior

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2008.11.021>

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Twin, adoption, and family studies have established the heritability of suicide attempts and suicide. Identifying specific suicide diathesis-related genes has proven more difficult. As with psychiatric disorders in general, methodological difficulties include complexity of the phenotype for suicidal behavior and distinguishing suicide diathesis-related genes from genes associated with mood disorders and other suicide-associated psychiatric illness. Adopting an endophenotype approach involving identification of genes associated with heritable intermediate phenotypes, including biological and/or behavioral markers more proximal to genes, is an approach being used for other psychiatric disorders. Therefore, a workshop convened by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University, and the National Institute of Mental Health sought to identify potential target endophenotypes for genetic studies of suicidal behavior. The most promising endophenotypes were trait aggression/impulsivity, early-onset major depression, neurocognitive function, and cortisol social stress

response. Other candidate endophenotypes requiring further investigation include serotonergic neurotransmission, second messenger systems, and borderline personality disorder traits.



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Key Words

Endophenotype; genetics; suicide

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