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 July 24, 2007

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**DGNews**

### Pioneering Study Opens Roads for Tailor-Made Antidepressants

GRANADA, SPAIN -- August 6, 2007 -- Although the causes of depression have not been fully identified, scientists acknowledge that genetic and environmental factors play a common role in the onset of this disorder. One of the environmental risk factors more often related to depression is exposure to threatening life events. On the other side, from a genetic point of view, the serotonin transporter gene, with a crucial role in communication between neurons, could predispose to depression.

An international group of scientists, headed by professors Jorge Cervilla Ballesteros and Blanca Gutiérrez Martínez, from the department of Legal Medicine, Toxicology and Psychiatry of the University of Granada, has recently published in *Molecular Psychiatry* the study PREDICT-gene. The study confirms the relation between allele s in the serotonin transporter gene and exposure to threatening life events in the onset of depression. The study proves, for a population sample accounting for gender, age, and family history of psychiatric disorders, that 24% of the Spanish population, comprising people with the s/s genotype, need minimal exposure to threatening life events, unlike individuals with s/l or l/l genotypes, thus confirming the relation between genetic and environmental factors in this mental disorder.

The most important consequence of research on interaction between genetic and environmental factors is that, in the future, scientists will be able to produce measures to predict response to antidepressants taking into account each individual's genotype -- designing tailor-made drugs according to each person's genetic configuration and their exposure to environmental factors.

This study is framed in the international project PREDICT and is funded by the European Union and the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science. PREDICT has been carried out through a representative sample: a total of 737 people agreed to participate in the genetic tests, with ages ranging from 18 to 75, including patients of nine primary care centers in the South of Spain. This is the first representative population-based replication of earlier research, as until now research had been done into restricted population samples, comprising only women, adolescents, twins, or people with affective disorders.

SOURCE: University of Granada

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