



CONCORDANCE v.3 no.1

the newsletter of

Research into the Causes of Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder

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This newsletter is distributed quarterly to those individuals and organizations that have helped us in our research and expressed interest in our studies. We hope you find it informative. Should you have any questions about the newsletter or our study in general, please feel free to call us at 1-800-994-8182. -Patrick Reitz, Project Coordinator

Laboratory Analyses Proceeding / Publication of Results

By Vishwajit L. Nimgaonkar, MD, PhD

We are now analyzing DNA samples from approximately 500 individuals with diagnoses of psychotic disorder and their relatives in the USA. There are thousands of possible genetic markers which may give us clues about causation. We have begun to look at these possibilities in an ordered manner. We are initially investigating the most promising 'candidate genes', such as genes related to dopamine and serotonin (5-HT) function in the brain. We are also examining particular chromosomal regions, such as chromosomes 6 and 13. To date, we have analyzed approximately

16 markers at Pittsburgh. Over 500 DNA samples are simultaneously being analyzed by our collaborators in India. They have analyzed over 12 DNA markers. These analyses not only complement our work in USA, but also allow us to explore novel genes. We also wish to explore these markers in other ethnic groups. Therefore, we are collaborating with investigators in China as well as South Korea. Our current challenge is to find ways of speeding up our laboratory work, as well as analysis. **Please see below for a list of publications describing our recent work.**

Recent Publications resulting from our studies include the following professional journal articles:

1. Strauss J, Zhang XR, Barron Y, Ganguli R, **Nimgaonkar VL** (1999). Lack of association between schizophrenia and a pancreatic phospholipase A-2 Gene (PLA2GIB) polymorphism. Psychiatric Genetics, 9(3), 153-155.
2. **Nimgaonkar VL**, Fujiwara TM, Dutta M, Wood J, Gentry K, Maendel S, Morgan K, Eaton JW (2000). Low prevalence of psychoses among the Hutterites, an isolated religious community. American Journal of Psychiatry (in press).
3. Chowdari KV, Wood J, Ganguli R, Gottesman II, **Nimgaonkar VL** (2000). Lack of association between schizophrenia and a CAG repeat polymorphism of the hSKCa3 gene in a North Eastern US sample. Molecular Psychiatry (in press).
4. Gentry K, **Nimgaonkar, VL** (2000). Association studies of mitochondrial DNA variants in schizophrenia. Psychiatric Genetics (in press).

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR STUDY?

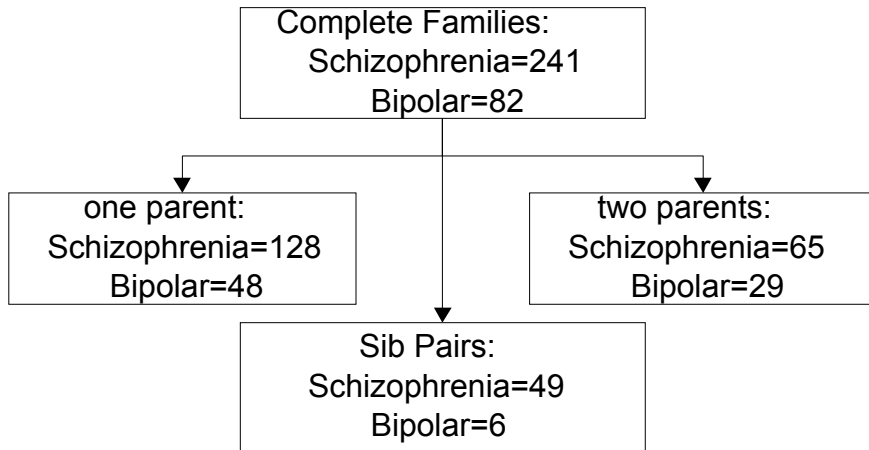
As a family study, it requires the participation of either one of the following two groups:

1. an ill family member diagnosed with Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, or Bipolar Disorder and one or both parents (note: parents do not need to be ill also).
2. families in which there are two siblings who are both affected by Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, or Bipolar Disorder are also eligible to participate. If two affected siblings participate, it is desirable, but not necessary, for the parents to participate. Participants will be asked to answer questions from a structured interview and donate a small sample of blood.

Progress Report: Families completed

by Joel Wood, Data Manager

The chart below displays the number of families we have been able to include in the study since its beginning in June, 1997. To date, we have performed interviews, collected blood, and obtained other clinical information on a total of 323 families. **If you can count yourself among these families, we cannot thank you enough!** As the chart indicates, 241 of these families have at least one member diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, and an additional 82 have at least one person diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Further breakdowns show the number of families with two or one parent/parents, and the number with two affected siblings. These totals do not reflect the large number of families our team is currently in the process of completing. Additional families not included in these figures are on hold or have been excluded from the study for various reasons.



Our ultimate goal is to obtain participation by 250 families with affected sibling pairs, and 300 families with a single affected person and a parent. We are always happy to hear from

new families interested in participating. **If you would like to participate, or learn more about our study, please call us toll free at 1 - 800 - 994 - 8182. For eligibility details, please see the box below.**

CONTACT US!

Toll free: **1-877-363-5895** (Schizophrenia) / **1-800-994-8182** (Bipolar Disorder).
www.pitt.edu/~nimga/ (schizophrenia) / www.wpic.pitt.edu/research/neurogen/ (bipolar disorder)
Contact Dr. Nimgaonkar directly at (412) 624-0823 or email nimga+@pitt.edu

Mood-SR Lifetime Survey and Social Rhythm Metric Short Form

By Gretchen Rettinger, Administrative Assistant

In order to learn more about the causes of bipolar disorder, we recently mailed to consumers and their families who have participated in our study two questionnaires. They are the Mood-SR Lifetime Survey and the Social Rhythm Metric Short Form. These forms will be used to better define the range of differences that may be observed in those with bipolar disorder, and perhaps in unaffected relatives. It is our hope that these families will give us their continued support in this research effort. We are anxious to see the results from these questionnaires. If you have any questions regarding these forms, please feel free to contact us. We will be happy to answer any questions.

New Staff to Join our Team in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio

By Patrick Reitz, Project Coordinator

Three new clinical interviewers have begun work with our project. **Mary Settle, L.S.W.** of **St. Albans, WV** is psychiatric social worker who will cover the region from Huntington to Beckley WV. **Donna Kashmer, R.N.**, of **Sharon, PA** is a psychiatric nurse who will cover the Northwestern part of PA, and Northeastern OH. **Laura Balsler**, who most recently worked with mentally ill adults incarcerated in prison, will be covering the areas of **Columbus, Springfield, and Dayton, OH**. We welcome all of these new employees to our team. You may contact any one of them by leaving a message toll free at **1-800-994-8182**.