THE FUTURE

Schizophrenia is a syndrome that is likely not only to be genetically complex, but also characterized by phenotypic complexity. Many researchers have begun to explore endophenotypes that are typically easier to define and quantify and may be more closely associated with a specific genetic factor. Our group has decided to explore the alternate phenotype of psychosis. Psychosis, defined as a lifetime episode of hallucinations and/or delusions, is an integral part of the definition of schizophrenia. However, psychosis is also an important symptom cluster in some patients with bipolar disorder, as well as in patients with other mood disorders. We plan to test the hypothesis that psychosis may be associated with genetic factors that sometimes appear associated with schizophrenia and alternately may appear in patients suffering from bipolar disorder.

Ongoing collaborative efforts employing both large data sets and meta-analytic methods are beginning to help narrow in on a number of replicated regions of interest. There is also a growing potential to merge molecular genetics and functional genomics in the investigation of multiple risk genes. The convergence of genetics and genomics can be seen when association findings for candidate genes begin to correlate with consistent genome scan linkage results and significant alterations in gene expression. This work will be further expanded by the new field of proteomics. Proteomics promises to elucidate biological mechanisms and expression patterns at the level of the protein, and in fact, some researchers have already applied this technology to the study of psychiatric disorders.[47-49] MF

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