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NZ discovers first brain marker for anxiety disorder

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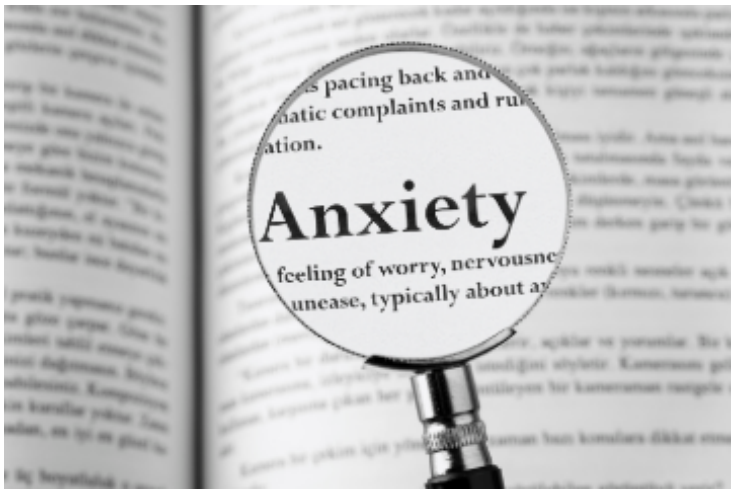
The biomarker is based on a theory that has been evolving for more than 50 years



A University of Otago researcher has discovered a brain signal that will help improve the diagnosis and treatment of anxiety disorders.

The team from New Zealand (NZ) has completed the final step in testing their biomarker, a brain rhythm produced by emotional conflict, in patients with anxiety.

The research, funded by the NZ Health Research Council, found that patients with anxiety disorders had high conflict rhythmicity that differed in its extent across diagnoses.

Those with high scores represent a specific kind of anxiety disorder, which will be more likely to respond to specific anti-anxiety drugs. However, those with particularly extreme scores will be resistant to conventional treatment.

The new biomarker can help develop new diagnostic tests and treatments for anxiety disorders, meaning patients will achieve remission faster and with a less hit-and-miss choice of treatments, the researcher says.