

NIH injects \$8.9M to identify genetic causes of depression in South Korea

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World's largest study of genetic risk factors for depression will enroll 20,000 women

A team of researchers will lead the largest population study of its kind aimed at learning more about the genetic variations that affect individuals' risk for depression after receiving a five-year, \$8.98 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The study, 'Identifying the Genetic Causes of Depression in a Deeply Phenotyped Population from South Korea', will focus on deep phenotyping — looking at the full picture of all the clinical features and symptoms and many of the environmental risk factors of the disease or condition — to determine what specific genetic factors could underly major depressive disorder in all the ways it manifests.

The study also will create the largest available dataset of genetic information related to major depressive disorder for East Asian individuals, increasing the diversity of genetic discovery efforts.

The research teams from US-based Virginia Commonwealth University will interview 20,000 women in South Korea, 10,000 with recurrent major depression and 10,000 in the control group, for this project.

With the work this team is doing to understand the causes of major depressive disorder, researchers are hopeful that, decades in the future, scientists might have a way to treat the biological mechanisms that cause major depression.