triggering, and disorder-prolonging factors. Effective treatment strategies have to be based on an accurate differential diagnosis concerning the complex constellation of conditions underlying and establishing the dynamic process of a disorder and its meaning

S16.02

Pychopathology and classification - married or divorced

G. Stanghellini. *Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Chieti, Florence, Italy*

Qualitative analyses is a phenomenological-oriented framework for psychopatological research useful in hypothesis formulation and exploratory studies, as well as in assessement of real world, first-personal experiences of laboratory findings or sub-personal impairments. Its aim is a wide range understanding of the patient's morbid subjectivity, not constrained in a priori fixed schemata.

We describe the basic principles of this method applied to psychopathological research. The qualitative approach to anomalous experience is concerned with bringing forth the typical feature(s) of actual personal experiences. A three-step procedure is described entailing assessement of subjective experiences, positing of subjective experiences within personal narratives and finally the construction of trans-personal prototypes. Qualitative research method is based on systematic but flexible interrogation of initially unstructured phenomena; it requires maximum elasticity in generating new categories from phenomena and enhances dense conceptual development and dialectical process between phenomena and the clinician's conceptualizations. It promotes also clinical setting as a source of relevant data of research; it also allows knowledge of single patients deeper than the experimental setting and may promote s a more circunstantiated comprehension of them.

Symposium: Current issues on genetics of suicidal behaviour

S30.01

Genetic findings in the HPA-axis in suicide attempters

D. Wasserman, M. Sockolowski, J. Wasserman. *National Center for Suicide Prevention and Prevention of Mental Problems (NASP), Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden*

According to a stress-vulnerability model, genetic set-up, as well as environmental exposure to psychological stress, contributes to a person's predisposition for suicidality, as well as to Major Depression (MD). The main neurochemical findings on suicidality have suggested alterations in neurosytems which are usually implicated in MD; a lowered serotonergic (5HT) activity, depletion of the noradrenergic (NA) system and dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. Whereas the genes of e.g. the 5HT system and of the key NA-biosynthesis enzyme, tyrosine hydroxylase, have been studied extensively in this context the genes in the HPA axis have only begun to be investigated recently.

Our group was the first to study the genetic variation in the CRHR1 gene in connection to depression and stress among suicidal individuals. We reported also findings that genetic variation in a transcription factor of the POMC gene, TBX 19, which is regulated by CRH, showed association and linkage to the anger/hostility personality trait and suicidality. Those results suggest that genetic variation in the CRH-mediated regulation of the HPA axis is a factor of importance in suicidality and, as other have shown as well, for major depression.

During symposiums the results obtained from the replication analyses of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in candidate genes, in 1000 family trios with suicide attempter offspring, by using the transmission disequilibrium test both in a two-stages screening/replication sample design and in detailed reanalysis in the entire sample, will be discussed.

S30.02

Role of BDNF gene in suicidal behaviours

M. Sarchiapone. *Department of Health Sciences, University of Molise, Campobasso, Italy*

Background and Aims: Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) has been implicated in neuronal survival and plasticity and reported as being involved in various mental illnesses, including attempted and completed suicide. Evidence from postmortem studies has also shown an altered expression of BDNF in suicide victims brains. We previously investigated the impact of the Val66Met polymorphism of the BDNF gene in determining a suicide attempt in depressed patient and found an association between the BDNF variant and history of early maltreatment in depressed patients with suicide attempts. We then conducted a study on post-mortem brains of suicide completers and their controls to further test the hypothesis of an involvement of BDNF in suicide-related neurobiological processes.

Methods: 535 specimens of brain from subjects dead either by suicide (N=271) and by other cause (N= 261) were genotyped for the Val66Met and Prom 281 CA polymorphisms of the BDNF gene.

Results:. No associations were found between either the first or the second variant of the BDNF gene and the suicidal behaviour.

Conclusions: as the case for other candidate genes, results from genetic studies of the BDNF gene are conflicting and arduous to replicate. Based on the analysis of bias in the study design and procedures, assimilation of methodology and increase in sample size could be helpful in addressing the result variability in such studies.

S30.03

Role of serotonergic pathways on suicidal behaviour: Relationship with the impulsivity of the suicide attempt

P. Saiz. *Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain*

Suicidal behaviour is a serious problem world-wide. However, the number of risk factors and the complex nature of their interactions do not allow sufficiently accurate prediction of whether a given individual is likely to try to commit suicide. Several lines of evidence suggest that suicidal behaviour has a genetic component.

In recent years, a growing number of molecular genetic studies have focused on the serotonin system, suggesting that this system may be involved in the pathogenesis of suicidal behaviour, aggression, and impulsivity. Post-mortem studies have reported fewer serotonin transporter (5-HTT) binding sites and greater expression of serotonin 2A (5-HT2A) receptors in the brains of suicide victims compared to control subjects, partly due to functional polymorphisms that affect the expression of these genes.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2008.01.115 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In this the presentation we discuss data suggesting an association between the A-1438G (rs6311) polymorphism of the 5-HT2A receptor gene and the impulsivity of the suicidal behaviour. However, we found an excess of the -1438A allele in non-impulsive suicide attempts as compared with impulsive suicide attempts and with a healthy control group. These findings agree prior report by Giegling et al (2006) and suggest that this functional polymorphism may modify the phenotype of suicidal behaviour and could be related to the impulsivity of the attempt.

S30.04

Interplay of environment, genes and cognitions in the vulnerability to suicide attempts

P. Courtet. *Université Montpellier, Inserm U888, Montpellier, France*

Suicidal individuals are constantly submitted to the influence of psychosocial life events that may act as triggers as well as vulnerability factors to the suicidal behaviour. On the other hand, suicidal persons nearly always suffer from psychiatric disorders, and growing evidence suggest that they carry vulnerability traits related to psychological traits and genetic factors. In recent studies we shown that decision makingwas involved in the vulnerability to suicidal behaviour independently from the psychiatric disorders of the patients. We reported that decision making was influenced by several serotonergic genotypes associated with the vulnerability to suicidal behaviour.

First, we will examine the nature of the interactions between candidate genes and environmental factors in the susceptibility to suicide attempts. Some data suggest that the genes coding for 5HTT and BDNF influence role of childhood maltreatment on suicidal risk. Moreover, we investigated the existence of such interactions on the risk of severity of the suicidal behaviour. We created an index of suicidal severity by assessing various characteristics of the suicidal act. We investigated whether this suicidality index was influenced by 5HTT genotypes, history of childhood maltreatment and their combination.

Second, by assessing several cognitive functions including decision making, in suicide attempters, we reported the influence of cognitive functioning on the risk of occurrence of some specific stressful life events and a correlation with childhood early maltreatment.

In conclusion, the data presented here suggest that the relationship between environmental factors, genes and cognitive functioning in suicide attempters are of both interactive and correlative natures.

Symposium: Predictors of the longitudinal course of mood and anxiety diosorders

S18.01

Predictors of the longitudinal course of mood and anxiety disorders in children and adolescents

M. Preisig [1], S. Rothen [1,2], O. Halfon [1], D. Fornerod [1], C.L. Vandeleur [2], F. Ferrero [2]. [1] *Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital Center of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland* [2] *Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland*

Background and Aims: Follow-up studies on the offspring of parents with psychiatric disorders offer the opportunity to study the influence of parental disorders on both the incidence and course of psychopathology in their children. Using this study design, we are examining the impact of parental psychopathology and potential individual risk factors on the course of depression in childhood and adolescence.

Methods: As part of a family study, we have collected extensive clinical information on 59 probands with bipolar disorder, 50 probands with major depressive disorder, 29 probands with alcohol or heroin dependence and 45 medical controls with children in the age range from 7 to 17 years (N=283). Probands and their spouses have been interviewed using the DIGS, offspring using the K-SADS. Parents have also provided diagnostic information on their children using the FH-RDC. Both offspring and parents have been followed up every three years, which will make it possible to prospectively test predictors of course in children.

Results: Collection of follow-up data is ongoing. The main results regarding the impact of parental and individual risk factors on the course of depression in children in terms of long-term social impairment and the presence of episodes at later follow-up exams will be presented at the conference. The individual risk factors examined will include the sex, birth weight and personality of children, the age of onset of depression, the presence of comorbid disorders, parenting attitudes and familial functioning.

Conclusions: clinical and research implications of the results will be discussed.

S18.02

Childhood adversity as a risk factor for the early onset and chronicity of depression and anxiety disorders

J. Angst, A. Gamma, V. Ajdacic-Gross, W. Roessler. *Zurich University Psychiatric Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland*

Background: Multiple genes and environmental factors, especially childhood adversity, play a role in the genesis of vulnerabilities for depression and anxiety.

Method: In the Zurich Study of young adults, childhood adversity and childhood problems were assessed in retrospect. A factor analysis revealed two factors 1) 'family problems' and 2) 'behavioural problems'. Major depressive episodes (MDE) were defined by DSM-III-R criteria and generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) by DSM-III criteria (duration one month). An anxious personality in childhood or adolescence was defined subjectively as having been more anxious than peers with a negative impact on development. Chronicity was defined by a daily or at least weekly occurrence of the syndrome during the previous twelve months; six interviews were carried out from age 20/21 to 40/41. We compared 87 chronic and 105 non-chronic MDE cases and 62 chronic and 43 non-chronic GAD cases.

Results: Higher family problem scores, earlier onset and chronicity, and an anxious personality in childhood or adolescence were all associated with each other; with a few exceptions this was true for both MDE and GAD.

Conclusions: As hypothesised childhood adversity was a risk factor for the earlier onset and chronicity of MDE and GAD.

S18.03

Predictors of the longitudinal course of depression and quality of life in depressed patients

C.H. Kuehner, S. Huffziger. *Central Institute of Mental Health, Research Group Longitudinal and Intervention Research, Mannheim, Germany*

Background and Aims: Depressive disorders are characterized by high rates of recurrence and chronic developments, particularly in treated

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2008.01.115 Published online by Cambridge University Press