

Genetic epidemiology

Pak Sham

Institute of Psychiatry, London, UK

Studies of families, twins, and adoptees have helped to quantify the genetic contributions to and overlaps between depression, anxiety, phobias and alcoholism, and to refine the boundaries of the schizophrenia spectrum. Analyses of covariance structures in twin data have confirmed genetic susceptibility and recent life stresses as the major determinants of depression. Genetic modelling of family data on schizophrenia and bipolar disorder indicates three or more common genes each having a small multiplicative effect on risk, although rare major genes may be present in some families. Linkage studies have localised genes for familial Alzheimer's disease on chromosomes 14 and 21; disease mutations on these chromosomes have since been isolated. Association studies have identified susceptibility (or protective) genes for Alzheimer's disease and alcoholism. Several tentative linkage and association findings in schizophrenia and bipolar disorder require further study.

Genetic variation in human populations is the result of the balance between mutation and selection. Some genetic mutations cause severe, recognisable diseases, almost without regard to the rest of the genome or to the environment. Such Mendelian diseases are usually rare because affected individuals tend to have few children. Other genetic mutations have smaller effects on the organism, and such mutations are usually more frequent because they tend to have less effect on reproductive fitness. The clinical effects of some rare 'major' mutations and certain combinations of common 'minor' mutations and environmental risk factors may be almost indistinguishable. Genetic epidemiology aims to resolve the genetic and environmental aetiological factors for these complex syndromes.

A gene that increases the susceptibility to a disorder can be thought of as a risk factor. However, unlike environmental risk factors, genetic effects can be studied indirectly through the familial aggregation of observed traits. Further disentanglement of genetic and environmental factors can be achieved by the study of twins and adoptees. With recent advances in molecular genetic techniques, genetic factors can now be studied directly by relating the disorder to variations in DNA sequence.

Genetic epidemiology comprises a set of principles and methods for the study of genetic factors. It is built around the 'laws' which govern the transmission of genes from parent to offspring, and their predictable and

Postal address:
Dr Pak Sham, Institute of
Psychiatry, De Crespigny
Park, Denmark Hill,
London SE5 8AF, UK

testable consequences on the occurrence of the disorder in families and in populations. Morton and Chung¹ define genetic epidemiology as 'a science that deals with the etiology, distribution, and control of disease in groups of relatives, and with inherited causes of disease in populations'. Below is a selective survey of recent applications of genetic epidemiological methods to adult psychiatric disorders.

Family studies

Family studies examine the rates of illnesses in the relatives of probands with different diagnoses or characteristics, with the aims of establishing familial factors in aetiology and clarifying the familial overlap between clinical syndromes and/or associated biopsychosocial traits, and the interaction of familial factors with social and other environmental factors in the development of illness.

Familial aggregation of affective disorders was confirmed by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Collaborative Study of Depression², which included 616 probands and 2,423 first degree relatives. The prevalence of bipolar I disorder was 2.4% in the relatives of schizoaffective probands, 5.8% in the relatives of bipolar I probands, 2.8% in the relatives of bipolar II probands, and 0.6% in the relatives of unipolar probands. The lack of an elevated risk to bipolar illness in the relatives of unipolar probands suggests that the majority of unipolar depression is genetically distinct from bipolar disorder.

Familial and social factors were examined in the Camberwell Collaborative Depression Study³⁻⁵. The first degree relatives of 83 depressed probands were found not only to have an increased risk of depression, but also an increased frequency of life events. However, the risk of depression in relatives was not significantly related to their own experience of life events during the study period, nor to the presence of life events preceding the index illness in the proband. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that the association between life events and depression in the community were partially due to shared familial factors that predispose to both conditions.

The relationship between depression, anxiety and alcoholism was examined by Merikangas *et al*⁶ in a study of 215 probands (133 with major depression and 82 normal controls) and 1331 first degree relatives. They found strong comorbidity between depression and anxiety, and weaker comorbidity between depression and alcoholism and between anxiety and alcoholism, among the probands and relatives. By fitting a trivariate multifactorial model to the data relating the combinations of diagnoses in relatives to the combinations of diagnoses in probands, they

showed that comorbidity was due to correlations between the familial (possibly genetic) components of the liabilities to the three syndromes.

The relationship between familial, biological and social factors in psychosis was examined in the Camberwell Collaborative Psychosis Study⁷. The study included 195 probands with functional psychosis and 891 first degree relatives. In addition to confirming that schizophrenia and affective psychosis are both familial, the study also showed that female and early onset probands with schizophrenia had more relatives with schizophrenia than male and late onset probands⁸. Similar findings have been reported from several recent studies⁹⁻¹², but not others^{13,14}. Interestingly, there is tentative evidence for an increased frequency of CAG repeat expansions in female and early onset patients with schizophrenia¹⁵.

Two recent large-scale family studies have examined the boundaries of the 'schizophrenia spectrum'. The Roscommon study¹⁶⁻¹⁹ included 384 psychotic and 150 control probands and 1,753 directly interviewed relatives (86% of traceable living relatives). The risk of schizophrenia was increased in the relatives of probands with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, other non-affective psychotic disorders, schizotypal and paranoid personality disorders, and, to a lesser extent, with psychotic affective disorder. The risk of bipolar disorder, on the other hand, was significantly increased only among the relatives of probands with affective psychosis. This suggests two overlapping dimensions of familial predisposition, one for schizophrenia and one for affective psychosis. When an attempt was made to order the diagnostic categories along a continuum of familial loading for schizophrenia by fitting a multi-threshold liability model to the data, schizophrenia and affective psychosis occupied opposite poles of the continuum, but the relative positions of the other diagnostic categories could not be determined²⁰.

The Mainz study²¹ included 525 probands with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder or major depression, and 64 probands with alcoholism and 109 probands from the general population. A total of 2,070 first degree relatives were directly interviewed (82% of all living relatives). The results were broadly similar to those of the Roscommon study, with significant familial aggregation between schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder, and between schizoaffective disorder and bipolar disorder, but no significant association between schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. The risk of major depression was increased among the relatives of probands of all diagnostic categories except alcoholism, but the relatives of probands with major depression did not show any increase in risk to any psychotic diagnosis. The increase in risk of major depression in the families of psychotic patients may be due to social as well as genetic factors.

Data from a Swedish family study have been reanalysed to examine a particular prediction generated by the maternal influenza hypothesis of

schizophrenia^{22,23}. The prediction was that younger siblings would be at higher risk to schizophrenia because viral infection could be introduced by their older siblings to their mothers during gestation. Consistent with this prediction, relatives who had one sibling three or four years older were found to have a significantly increased risk of schizophrenia (odds ratio 1.66, 95% CI 1.05–2.44), and those with two or more such siblings had an even higher risk of schizophrenia (odds ratio 4.44, 95% CI 2.31–8.56).

Twin studies

Twin studies attempt to untangle genetic from other familial factors in the development of illness by examining the extent to which monozygotic (MZ) twins are more alike than dizygotic (DZ) twins with respect to the illness, and assuming that MZ and DZ twins are equally similar with respect to environmental factors relevant to the illness (the equal environment assumption). Twins can also be used to investigate the genetic overlap between different syndromes, the continuity of genetic factors at different stages of the illness, and the relationship between genetic factors and mediating or environmental variables (e.g. personality and psychosocial stress) in the development of the illness.

Recent analyses of twin data have used structural equation modelling (SEM), which facilitates comparisons between competing causal models^{24,25}. Each causal model postulates a number of genetic and environmental variables that cannot be measured directly. However, through their shared effects on the observed variables, these latent variables induce a predictable pattern of correlations between the observed variables. For example, if the only familial influence on a trait is the additive effect of several genes, then the trait should be twice as correlated between MZ twins than between DZ twins. By considering the compatibility between observed and predicted correlations, it is possible to validate a causal model and estimate the relative contributions of the latent variables to the variability of the observed traits. For categorically defined illnesses, correlations in liability can be estimated from the observed twin concordances and the population prevalence by assuming a liability-threshold model for the illness, and a bivariate normal distribution for the underlying liabilities of the twin pairs.

This biometrical approach has been applied to obsessional traits and symptoms, and neuroticism, using a sample of 419 twin pairs from the Institute of Psychiatry Normal Twin Register²⁶. The results indicate heritabilities of just under 50% for both obsessional traits and symptoms, and a considerable overlap between the genetic factors for obsessional

traits and those for obsessional symptoms. However, there was a larger genetic overlap between obsessional symptoms and neuroticism, than between obsessional traits and neuroticism. This suggests that genetic factors are involved in obsessional personality traits and in a more general 'neurotic tendency', and that the combination of these factors may be responsible for obsessional neurosis.

The genetic relationship between symptoms of anxiety and symptoms of depression was examined on 3,198 twin pairs from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council Twin Register²⁷. A large genetic factor, called 'genetic-distress', was extracted which loaded on both depression and anxiety items and accounted for about 30% of the total phenotypic variance in both sexes. Two other genetic factors and three environmental factors were also extracted; these were relatively minor and loaded differentially on either depression or anxiety items. The hypothesis of a common set of genetic factors for depression and anxiety was further supported by a study of 1,033 female-female twin pairs from the Virginia Twin Register²⁸. The genetic components for major depression and generalised anxiety disorder were perfectly correlated and accounted for about 30% of the variance in liability to both disorders. The environmental components of the two disorders were partially correlated.

This multivariate approach to genetic analysis has been extended by the Virginia group to include six psychiatric disorders: major depression, generalised anxiety disorder, phobia, panic disorder, bulimia and alcoholism²⁹. The results suggest two sets of shared genetic factors, one predisposing mainly to major depression and generalised anxiety disorder, and the other to phobia, panic disorder and bulimia. The genetic component to alcoholism was substantial but largely disorder-specific.

A similar analytic approach has been applied by the Virginia group to address the question of whether the same set of genes operated at different times to cause depression. Female-female twins were assessed on two occasions one year apart, and it was found that the same genetic factors accounted for just under 50% of the liability to major depression on the two occasions, but the environmental factors were occasion-specific³⁰. Neuroticism was found to be strongly predictive of an onset of major depression over the one year period, and it was estimated that 70% of the correlation between neuroticism and major depression was due to common genetic factors³¹.

The Virginia group have also started to utilise their twin sample to examine the interaction between genetic factors and social adversity in causing depression in women. Adverse life events over a 1 year period were found to be familial, with genetic and shared environment each accounting for 20% of the variance in liability³². Genetic factors were

more important for 'personal events' whereas shared environment was more important for 'network events'. Over the period, genetic factors were found to intensify the effects of stressful life events in causing depression³³. An attempt was made to create an integrated model incorporating many childhood and adult variables in the aetiology of depressive episodes in women³⁴. Variables were placed in three layers of a causal network, a distal layer consisting of genetic factors, parental warmth and childhood parental loss, an intermediate layer consisting of neuroticism, lifetime trauma and past depression, and a proximal layer consisting of social support, recent difficulties and recent stressful life events. The model accounted for 50% of the variance in the liability to major depression, with recent life events, genetic factors, and past history of depression being most important.

Because of the smaller number of subjects, twin studies on psychotic disorders tend to have the more modest aim of estimating heritability. Kendler³⁵ summarised data from 9 twin studies on schizophrenia, which gave MZ and DZ concordances of 53% (211/401) and 15% (74/478), and an overall heritability estimate of 68% for the underlying liability to schizophrenia. Similar figures were obtained in a subsequent study based on the National Psychiatric and Twin Registries of Norway³⁶ which gave MZ and DZ concordances of 48.4% (15/31) and 3.6% (1/28), respectively. For bipolar disorder, Bertelson *et al*³⁷ found MZ and DZ concordances of 21/34 and 3/37, giving a heritability estimate of 59%.

The relative magnitudes of the genetic contribution to several different diagnostic definitions of the schizophrenia spectrum have been examined in the Maudsley Twin Sample of 21 MZ and 21 DZ twin pairs³⁸. The most 'genetic' definition, which consisted of DSM-III schizophrenia, schizotypal personality disorder, affective disorder with psychosis, and atypical psychosis, gave an MZ/DZ concordance ratio of almost 8:1.

MZ discordance for schizophrenia may be caused by the 'reduced penetrance' of a schizophrenic genotype, or by the presence of sporadic (i.e. non-genetic) cases. The first but not the second explanation would predict an increased risk of schizophrenia among the children of discordant twin pairs. The risk of schizophrenia among the children of ill and well members of discordant MZ twin pairs was estimated at 16.8% (6/47) and 17.4% (4/24) in one study³⁹ and 17.9% (5/28) and 4.4% (1/45) in another⁴⁰. The similarity of these risk estimates to those obtained on the children of schizophrenics in the general population indicates that most discordant MZ twins are genetically predisposed to schizophrenia. This suggests that environmental factors alone are seldom sufficient to cause schizophrenia, although they may play a decisive role in some individuals genetically predisposed to schizophrenia. An intensive study of 23 discordant MZ twin-pairs showed that 7 pairs had diverged in behaviour by the age of 5 years, indicating early

environmental factors⁴¹. The second trimester of fetal development has been suggested as a critical window for environmental insults. The development of dermatoglyphic patterns in hands and feet is completed by the end of the second trimester, and discordant MZ twins have been shown to be less alike in dermatoglyphic patterns than normal MZ twins⁴². If prenatal environment is important in schizophrenia, then concordance is expected to be higher in monozygotic than in dizygotic MZ twins. Consistent with this, one study has found 60% (9/15) concordance for MZ twins with opposite-hand preference (an indicator of monozygosity), and only 32% (18/56) for MZ twins with same-hand preference⁴³.

Adoption studies

The aim of adoption studies is to distinguish genetic from nongenetic aetiological factors, by comparing the risk of illness in the biological and adoptive relatives of ill adoptees, or by comparing the risk of illness in the biological relatives of ill and control adoptees. Although adoption studies do not rely on the equal environment assumption of twin studies, both the biological and the adoptive families of adoptees are unlikely to be representative of the general population. Moreover, the extent that adoption studies achieve separation between genetic and environmental factors depends critically on the age at adoption.

The Copenhagen adoption study⁴⁴, historically important in demonstrating a genetic component in schizophrenia, has been extended to the rest of Denmark⁴⁵. The results from the new 'provincial sample' were consistent with those from the original sample; the biological relatives of schizophrenic adoptees showed an increased risk of chronic schizophrenia (8/171) and latent schizophrenia (14/171), but not affective disorders, compared to the adoptive relatives of the same adoptees, or the biological and adoptive relatives of control adoptees. The combined sample was re-diagnosed using DSM-III criteria⁴⁶, which showed that schizophrenia spectrum disorders (schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder mainly schizophrenia, schizotypal personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder) were significantly more frequent in the first and second degree biological relatives of schizophrenic adoptees (16/68 and 14/141) than in the first and second degree relatives of control adoptees (5/107 and 4/192).

Adoption studies have also demonstrated genetic components in affective disorders and in alcoholism. Mendlewicz and Rainer⁴⁷ found that the risk of bipolar or schizoaffective disorder was 6/57 among the biological parents but only 1/57 among the adoptive parents of bipolar

adoptees. Wender *et al*⁴⁸ found that the risk of bipolar or unipolar disorder was 20/387 in the biological relatives and only 5/180 in the adoptive relatives of adoptees with an affective disorder. Goodwin *et al*⁴⁹ demonstrated a significantly increased risk of alcoholism in the adopted away sons of alcoholic fathers (12/67), compared to the adopted away sons of non-alcoholic fathers (5/97). In a later study on female adoptees⁵⁰, there was no increased risk of alcoholism among the daughters of alcoholic biological parents. However, more recent studies^{51,52} have found an increased risk of alcoholism in both male and female adoptees with an alcoholic biological parent, compared to adoptees with normal parents. These findings are consistent with recent twin studies⁵³ in suggesting a modest genetic component in the liability to alcoholism.

Cloninger *et al*⁵⁴ classified 862 adopted men in the Stockholm Adoption Study into 4 groups: non-abusers, and mild, moderate, and severe abusers of alcohol, and applied discriminant function analysis to variables concerning alcohol abuse and other characteristics of the biological parents ('congenital' factors), and variables that might affect upbringing before and after placement in the adoptive family ('post-natal environment'), in order to find combinations of variables that best distinguish the four groups. The most significant discriminant function associated the moderate abusers with biological fathers who had recurrent alcohol abuse and criminal convictions since adolescence. The other two discriminant functions were similar, with recurrent alcohol abuse not requiring treatment in the biological parents and low occupational status in the adoptive parents. Two types of alcoholism were suggested: a common 'milieu-limited' type (Type I) that occurs in both sexes as a result of gene-environment interaction, and a rarer 'male-limited' type (Type II) that is more genetic, affects men from adolescence, and is associated with sociopathy. Hill⁵⁵ found very high rates of alcoholism (60%) but not sociopathy in the parents of 29 pairs of alcoholic siblings, and suggested a third type of highly familial alcoholism not associated with sociopathy (Type III).

Genetic models

Having demonstrated that a disorder has a genetic component, the next logical step is to uncover its 'mode of inheritance', i.e. the number of loci involved and the manner in which the genes at these loci determine the phenotype. Since the true 'mode' is likely to be complex, it is customary to consider simplified models with the modest aim of demonstrating the existence of a single locus (or at most two or three loci) whose alleles

have a major effect on the liability to illness, and partition the remainder of the variance in liability to familial and non-familial factors^{56,57}. The analysis usually involves assessing the probability of the observed family data under alternative models, to see what kind of genetic and environmental factors are most compatible with the data. Technically, the probability of the observed family data under a model is defined as the likelihood of the model, and is used as a measure of the support for the model provided by the data.

Efforts to isolate major genes by model-fitting have focused mainly on the psychoses, probably because these disorders are relatively rare and distinct compared to neurotic conditions such as depression and anxiety. However, the numerous studies that attempted to discriminate monogenic from polygenic inheritance for schizophrenia have produced conflicting results⁵⁸. Results for bipolar disorder are similarly inconclusive⁵⁹.

There was some tentative evidence of a major locus for bipolar disorder in the family data from the NIMH Collaborative Depression Study⁶⁰. A mixed model incorporating a major locus and a polygenic background gave a better fit to the data than a model with only polygenic background. However, this evidence relied on using age-at-onset as an indicator of liability, and was tempered by the rejection of Mendelian transmission probabilities. No evidence of a major locus was found in a reanalysis of the same dataset that used a different approach to model age-at-onset⁶¹. Similarly, a mixed model analysis on the Lindelius family data of 270 schizophrenics and their relatives found no evidence for a major gene⁶².

There have been some attempts to include in genetic modelling a biological trait ('endophenotype') correlated with the liability to illness, in the hope that the trait would provide additional information about the liability and improve the power to resolve a major locus effect. Holzman *et al*⁶³ fitted a 'Mendelian latent structure' model to data on 210 children and grandchildren of MZ and DZ twins discordant for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, and found suggestive evidence for a dominant gene having an effect on both liability and eye-tracking. However, the estimated penetrance of about 10% would predict MZ and DZ concordances of about 10% and 5%, values inconsistent with estimates obtained from twin studies. Sham *et al*⁶⁴ fitted a two locus model to 18 Scottish families with schizophrenia in which auditory P300 latency had been measured, and found tentative evidence for a major locus that affects both liability and P300 latency. However, the alternative that the correlation between liability and P300 latency is caused by multiple small genetic effects was not considered.

McGue and Gottesman⁶⁵ have argued against a monogenic model for schizophrenia on several grounds. The prevalence is too high and the MZ

concordance is too low, in comparison to typical Mendelian disorders. Large pedigrees with multiple affected members in several generations are rarely encountered, but recessive inheritance is also unlikely because the risk of illness is as high in the children as in the siblings of schizophrenics. Moreover, a polygenic model is better able to account for the apparent steep drop in recurrence risk from MZ twins (about 50%) to first degree relatives (about 10%), and from first degree relatives to second degree relatives (about 3%), than a monogenic model. This is because the probability of sharing a combination of several alleles falls off much more rapidly than the probability of sharing a single allele as relationship becomes more distant. The high risk among the children of two schizophrenic parents (about 50%) also supports a polygenic rather than a monogenic model.

Risch⁶⁶ has also considered the compatibility of multilocus models with the observed recurrence risks in schizophrenia and concluded that at least three loci acting multiplicatively on risk of illness would be necessary. Similarly, Craddock *et al*⁶⁷ have concluded that the observed recurrence risks for bipolar disorder are within the limits compatible with models containing three or more loci acting multiplicatively on risk of illness, but incompatible with a multiplicative model with fewer loci, or with a heterogeneity model where each locus constitutes a separate and sufficient cause for the illness. Since additive effects on the liability scale translate approximately to multiplicative effects on risk to illness⁶⁸, the models favoured by McGue and Gottesman, Risch, and Craddock *et al* are not substantially different.

The validity of these conclusions depends on the accuracy of the recurrence risk estimates and on the appropriateness of the model assumptions. Adequate diagnostic information might be more difficult to obtain from distant relatives than from close relatives, and environmental risk factors might be shared to a greater extent by close relatives than by distant relatives. However, twin studies have found little evidence for a shared environmental component in schizophrenia or in bipolar disorder. On balance, it appears unlikely that schizophrenia or bipolar disorder is caused entirely by a single major gene, or by several major genes each responsible for a proportion of cases in the population. There are probably several common genes each with a small effect on risk, but rare major genes may also be present in some highly familial cases.

Linkage studies

Linkage studies attempt to infer the relative positions of two or more loci by examining how combinations of alleles at the loci are transmitted from

generation to generation. The formation of gametes involves the 'segregation' of the parental alleles into two equal subsets, so that each gamete contains half the parental alleles. The set of alleles contained in a gamete is known as a haplotype. An individual's genotype consists of a paternal haplotype and a maternal haplotype. Linkage refers to the tendency for a combination of alleles co-transmitted as a haplotype in one gametic generation to be co-transmitted again in the next gametic generation. In other words, the alleles at these loci in any gamete tend to be derived from either the paternal or the maternal haplotype, but not both.

The biological basis of linkage is that groups of alleles are connected to each other on chromosomes, and that for such a group to be separated in meiosis requires crossing over and exchange of genetic material between the two chromosomes of different parental origins. When two loci are considered, a gamete that contains one allele from the paternal haplotype and the other from the maternal haplotype is called a recombinant, and the fraction of gametes that are recombinant is called the recombination fraction between the two loci. A recombination fraction of 0 means that crossing over never occurs between the two loci, so that the loci must be extremely close to each other. A recombination fraction of 0.5 means that alleles at the two loci are combined at random during meiosis, so that the loci are either on different chromosomes or are very far apart on the same chromosome. The smaller the recombination fraction, the closer are the two loci.

If we were able to examine alleles directly in two successive generations of gametes, linkage analysis would involve simply counting the number of recombinants and non-recombinants. However, we are usually only able to make inferences about the recombination fraction indirectly through phenotypic data that provide partial information on genotypes (rather than haplotypes). The standard lod score method of linkage analysis is based on the likelihoods of the observed familial patterns of the phenotypes over a range of recombination fractions (θ) from 0 to 0.5 under assumed genetic models for the phenotypes^{69,70}. The lod score at a particular value of θ is defined as the logarithm (base 10) of the ratio of likelihoods evaluated at that value of θ and evaluated at $\theta = 0.5$. The maximum lod score over the entire range of possible values of θ is taken as a measure of the evidence in favour of linkage. When several families are studied, the lod score can be maximised jointly over θ and the proportion of families linked, to obtain a test of linkage assuming heterogeneity. A maximum lod score of 3 or more is traditionally taken as sufficient evidence to declare linkage, because theoretical consideration and empirical evidence indicate that, for Mendelian traits, less than 5% of linkages declared at this level are chance findings. Similarly, a lod score of below -2 at a certain value of θ is traditionally taken as sufficient evidence to exclude linkage at that value of θ .

The lod score method of linkage analysis requires a model for the disease locus, i.e. gene frequencies and penetrances, to be specified. Misspecification reduces the power of detecting linkage but does not increase the probability of falsely declaring linkage. Since genetic parameters are unknown for common psychiatric disorders, researchers have tended to use either a single 'best-guess' model or a range of different models. 'Non-parametric' methods which do not require a disease model to be specified are becoming increasingly used. Some of these methods are based on the excessive sharing of marker alleles by affected sibling pairs⁷¹, while others are based on adaptations of the lod score method⁷². Most linkage studies select large multi-generational pedigrees with multiple affected members on the basis that such pedigrees are most likely to segregate a major gene for the disorder, and are more powerful for detecting linkage, than smaller families with fewer affected individuals. The appropriateness of this approach for complex disorders caused by the interaction of a number of common genes has recently been questioned, and it has been suggested that affected sibling pairs with unaffected parents may be more informative because the parents in such families are less likely to be homozygous (and hence uninformative for linkage) when the susceptibility genes are common⁷³.

Linkage studies in psychiatry have focused mainly on the dementias and the psychoses. The localisation of major genes for early-onset familial Alzheimer's disease on chromosomes 21 and 14^{74,75} and the subsequent identification of several disease mutations on these chromosomes^{76,77} is a major triumph for the application of the linkage strategy to complex disorders. However, families in which the disorder is transmitted, without skipping, through several successive generations, are far more common for early onset Alzheimer's disease than for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Such families indicate the presence of dominant genes with high penetrance, and provide promising material in which to search for linkage. The relative sparsity of such families for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder is probably responsible for the failure so far of linkage analysis to unequivocally demonstrate and localise genes for these disorders.

The earliest linkage studies on the functional psychoses relied on classical markers such as colour blindness and HLA antigens, severely limiting the regions that can be studied. With the availability of DNA markers, the first regions to be studied were those in which cytogenetic abnormalities have been reported to be associated with psychosis. With subsequent technological developments, many centres have started to conduct systematic genome scans using hundreds of markers. Some of the more prominent findings are summarised in Tables 1 and 2. Currently, the strongest candidate regions are probably Xq26-28 and the pericentromeric region of chromosome 18 for bipolar disorder and the

Table 1 Some linkage findings in bipolar affective disorder

Region/locus	Findings
Xq26-28	Possible reduced father-son transmission ^{78,79} Possible association with fragile X ⁸⁰ 14 of 16 linkage studies reviewed in 1990 ⁵⁹ were positive Subsequent positive linkage studies ^{81-83,86,87} Subsequent negative linkage studies ⁸⁵ Largest lod=9.2 ⁸¹ , but subsequently retracted ⁸⁴ Current status: strong candidate
6p (HLA)	4 of 11 studies showed positive results ⁵⁹ Largest lod = 8.0, but questionable diagnostic definition ⁸⁸ Combined analysis of several studies negative ⁸⁹ Current status: weak candidate
11p	Amish study: lod=4.3 ⁹⁰ , but later retracted ⁹¹ Subsequent negative studies ^{92,93} One weakly positive study (lod > 1) ⁹⁴ Current status: weak candidate
21q22	Genome scan: lod=2.3, (one family had lod 3.4) ⁹⁵ Subsequent weakly positive study: lod=1.3 ⁹⁶ Combined analysis with TH: lod=3.6 ⁹⁶ Current status: moderately strong candidate
18 pericentromeric	Genome scan: excessive allele sharing over 50 cM ($p < 0.001$) ⁹⁷ Subsequent weakly positive studies ⁹⁸⁻¹⁰¹ Subsequent negative studies ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁴ Current status: moderately strong candidate

short arm of chromosome 6 for schizophrenia, but the evidence remains inconclusive even in these regions.

The lack of entirely consistent linkage results for the psychoses may reflect locus heterogeneity with several rare major genes each operating in a small proportion of families. Different samples will then have a different 'mix' of these forms, making replication difficult. Confirmation of tentative linkage results may then depend on the identification of disease mutations in a small number of large pedigrees. An alternative view is that major genes are extremely rare, so that the combined action of several common susceptibility genes are responsible for illness in the majority of large pedigrees selected for linkage analysis. A sensible strategy would then be to collect large numbers of nuclear families with affected sib-pairs, in addition to large multiplex pedigrees, for linkage analysis, and to look for associations between disease and marker alleles near linkage 'hot-spots' or candidate genes.

Association studies

Association studies attempt to establish the physical proximity of two loci by demonstrating associations between alleles of the loci, i.e. the

Table 2 Some linkage findings in schizophrenia

Region/locus	Findings
5q11-13	Balanced translocation associated with psychosis ¹⁰⁵ English & Icelandic pedigrees: lod = 6.5 ¹⁰⁶ (but see ¹⁰⁷) Combined analysis of several datasets: negative ¹⁰⁸ Review of subsequent studies ¹⁰⁹ : 12 negative, 1 weakly positive ¹¹⁰ Current status: weak candidate
Pseudoautosomal	Excess sex-concordance among affected sib-pairs ^{111,112} (but see ¹¹³) Subsequent positive studies ^{114,118} Subsequent negative studies ^{115-117,119,120} Current status: weak candidate
Dopamine receptors	
DRD1	Negative studies ¹²¹⁻¹²³
DRD2	Negative studies ¹²²⁻¹²⁸ (but translocation at 11q associated with psychosis ¹³⁶⁻¹³⁸)
DRD3	Negative studies ^{122,129,130}
DRD4	Negative studies ^{122,123,131-134}
DRD5	Negative studies ^{122,135} Current status: very weak candidates
22q	Genome scan: lod=1.5 ¹³⁹ (candidate genes IL2R ζ ¹⁴⁰ , COMT ¹⁴¹) First multi-centre replication study negative ¹⁴² (despite 2 weakly positive studies ^{143,144}) Second multi-centre replication study weakly positive (p=0.001) ¹⁴⁵ Current status: moderately strong candidate
6p	Genome scan: lod=3.2 ¹⁴⁶ (in enlarged sample lod=3.5 ¹⁴⁷) Subsequent positive studies ¹⁴⁸⁻¹⁵⁰ Subsequent negative studies ^{151,152} Current status: strong candidate

occurrence of certain combinations of alleles in the same gamete more frequently than expected given the allele frequencies in the population. In a large randomly mating population, allelic associations are diminished rapidly in successive generations by random recombination events in meiosis, unless the two loci are tightly linked. However, allelic associations can exist in the absence of linkage if there is population stratification or recent in-migration.

Association and linkage are two complementary approaches for gene mapping. Both methods are based on the increased frequencies of certain combinations of alleles (haplotypes) in gametes. A haplotype persists from generation to generation until a recombination event takes place between the loci, when a new haplotype is generated. In a population, haplotypes of loci that are unlinked or loosely linked tend to the product of recent recombination events, whereas haplotypes of loci that are tightly linked have probably been 'in coupling' for many generations. Linkage analysis attempts to detect 'local' increases in haplotype frequencies that apply only to closely related individuals, whereas association analysis attempts to detect 'global' increases for the entire population. In other words, under loose linkage, each pedigree will have a marker allele associated with the disease gene, but there will be no

tendency for the associated marker alleles to be the same for any two pedigrees. Linkage analysis will be more powerful than association analysis in this situation. Under tight linkage, however, most pedigrees that have inherited the same disease gene from a distant common ancestor will show an association between the disease and the same marker allele. Association analysis is potentially more powerful than linkage analysis in this situation. Association analysis is most powerful when the marker locus is the susceptibility locus itself, and is therefore the method of choice for testing candidate genes.

Two designs are commonly used to detect associations between disease and marker alleles. The first design is based on comparing the marker genotypes in patients and unrelated controls from the same population. The second design is based on comparing marker genotypes in patients and their parents. One variation of the second approach, the transmission disequilibrium test (TDT), is robust to hidden population stratification^{153,154}. The TDT considers heterozygous parents to see if some marker alleles are more likely than others to be transmitted to affected children.

An association between Alzheimer's disease and the apolipoprotein E (ApoE) ϵ_4 allele on chromosome 19 has been established by numerous studies which compared ApoE genotype frequencies in cases and controls¹⁵⁵. ApoE ϵ_4 has a frequency of about 13% in Caucasian populations, and increases the risk of Alzheimer's disease multiplicatively by a factor of about 3 per copy (so that the risk is increased about 9-fold among homozygous $\epsilon_4\epsilon_4$ individuals) by the age of 75 years^{156,157}. In some families segregating an Alzheimer's mutation at the APP (amyloid precursor) locus, ApoE ϵ_4 reduces the age-at-onset of dementia in individuals with the Alzheimer's mutation^{158,159}.

A negative association between alcoholism and the low activity form of ALDH2 (aldehyde dehydrogenase-class 2) on chromosome 12 has been found in oriental populations. The low activity allele (ALDH2-2) has a frequency of 15–25% in these populations¹⁶⁰ and causes a 'flush reaction' to alcohol due to the accumulation of acetaldehyde. In Japan, Shibuya and Yoshida¹⁶¹ compared 23 patients with alcoholic liver disease to 49 controls and found gene frequencies for ALDH2-2 of 0.07 and 0.35, respectively. In Taiwan, Thomasson *et al*¹⁶² compared 50 subjects with DSM-III alcohol dependence to 50 controls, and found gene frequencies for ALDH2-2 of 0.06 and 0.30, respectively. None of the alcoholics was homozygous for ALDH2-2. These data indicate that ALDH2-2 is strongly protective against alcoholism, although the allele is rare in Caucasian populations.

Another candidate locus for alcoholism is DRD2 (dopamine D2 receptor) on chromosome 11, because of the role of limbic dopamine pathways in the positive reinforcement of behaviours. Blum *et al*¹⁶³ found that the A1 allele at the TaqI restriction fragment length polymorphism

(RFLP) was present in 69% of 35 deceased alcoholics and only 20% of 28 non-alcoholic controls. A meta-analysis of the original and 10 subsequent studies found no evidence for an association when data from the original group were excluded, although one of the studies had no alcoholics and another had no controls¹⁶⁴. In another meta-analysis of 9 studies containing 491 alcoholics and 495 controls, Noble¹⁶⁵ found that TaqI-A1 was present in 25.7% of controls, 43.0% of all alcoholics and 56.3% of severe alcoholics, suggesting a dose-response relationship. Smith *et al*¹⁶⁶ found that among substance abusers, 84% of 89 individuals with the TaqI-A1 allele were moderate or heavy abusers, compared to 74% of 159 of individuals without the allele. Similarly, in a study of 200 white male substance users, Comings *et al*¹⁶⁷ found that 45% of the 73 subjects with the TaqI-A1 allele habitually spent more than \$25 on two or more drugs, compared to only 20% of the 127 subjects without the TaqI-A1 allele. Among the 39 subjects who had been expelled from school for fighting, 59% had the TaqI-A1 allele, compared to 31% of the other 154 subjects. The TaqI-A1 allele was significantly associated with early onset of substance abuse in these subjects. A role for DRD2 in substance abuse is also supported by genetic studies on animals selectively bred for propensity to drug dependence¹⁶⁸. On balance, there is highly suggestive evidence that DRD2 is involved in substance abuse.

Table 3 summarises some of the more prominent findings from association studies on the functional psychoses. No definite association has been found but the suggestion of an association of schizophrenia with alleles at D22S278 is interesting in relation to the positive linkage results obtained in this region. Also of interest are the tentative associations of schizophrenia with HLA antigens, as immunological factors have been hypothesised to be involved in schizophrenia.

Association analysis has therefore contributed to the finding of susceptibility (or protective) genes for Alzheimer's disease and alcoholism. However, definite allelic associations have not yet been established for bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

Conclusions

Genetic epidemiology draws on the mechanisms of heredity and the reproductive characteristics of populations to formulate methods of investigating genetic factors in human diseases. These methods can only be applied in conjunction with techniques from other fields, including clinical, psychological and social sciences, neurobiology and molecular genetics. The relative importance of these areas of knowledge in terms of

Table 3 Some association findings in psychosis

Region/locus	Findings
Bipolar disorder	
TH	Allelic association reported ¹⁶⁹ Subsequent negative studies ¹⁷⁰⁻¹⁷³ Subsequent weakly positive study ¹⁷⁴ Current status: weak candidate
MAOA	Allelic association reported ^{175,176} Subsequent negative study ¹⁷⁷ Current status: weak candidate
Schizophrenia	
HLA-A9	Allelic associations reported in 7 of 9 studies ¹⁷⁸ Subsequent negative studies ^{179,180} Subsequent positive studies ¹⁸¹ Current status: moderately strong candidate
HLA-DR4	Negative association reported ¹⁸² Current status: awaiting replication
PBGD	Allelic association reported ¹⁸³ Subsequent negative studies ^{184,185} Current status: very weak candidate
DRD2	Allelic association reported ¹⁸⁶ Subsequent negative studies ¹⁸⁷⁻¹⁹² Current status: very weak candidate
DRD3	Increased homozygosity reported ¹⁹³ Subsequent negative studies ¹⁹⁴⁻²⁰¹ Current status: weak candidate
DRD4	Negative studies ^{202,203} Current status: very weak candidate
D22S278	Weakly positive TDT results ($p=0.1$ ²⁰⁴ , $p=0.001$ ²⁰⁵) Current status: moderately strong candidate

TH, tyrosine hydroxylase; MAOA, monoamine oxidase A; PBGD, porphobilinogen deaminase.

aetiological research depends somewhat on the nature of the syndrome. The combination of genetic epidemiological principles and molecular genetic techniques has isolated high risk mutations for 'organic' syndromes such as Alzheimer's disease. The mechanisms whereby these mutations increase the risk to disease now require further clinical and neurobiological studies. The same combination of genetic epidemiology and molecular genetics may well succeed for the functional psychoses, but it is possible that additional input from other sciences, to help resolve aetiological heterogeneity and create quantitative measures of underlying vulnerability, is also necessary for the isolation of susceptibility genes for these more complex disorders. Aetiological research on depression, anxiety and other common conditions that merge with normality have so far tended to adopt a more 'holistic' approach to genetic factors, as genes of major effect are usually considered less likely for these conditions. However, as more candidate loci in the neurochemical pathways regulating mood and behaviour are discovered, it is likely that the effects

of particular alleles at these loci will be examined in conjunction with psychological and social factors.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Professor Robin Murray and Dr David Curtis for critical reading of the manuscript, and to the Wellcome Trust for financial support.

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