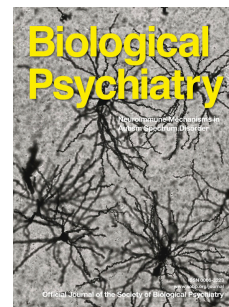


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Genetic Influences on the Developing Young Brain and Risk for Neuropsychiatric Disorders

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Genetic Influences on the Developing Young Brain and Risk for Neuropsychiatric Disorders

Running Head: Genetic Influences on Young Brain

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Abstract

Imaging genetics provides an opportunity to discern associations between genetic variants and brain imaging phenotypes. Historically, the field has focused on adults and adolescents; very few imaging genetics studies have focused on brain development in infancy and early childhood (from birth to age six). This is an important knowledge gap as developmental changes in brain during the prenatal and early postnatal period are regulated by dynamic gene expression patterns that likely play an important role in establishing an individual's risk for later psychiatric illness and neurodevelopmental disabilities. In this review, we summarize findings from imaging genetics studies spanning from early infancy to early childhood with a focus on studies examining genetic risk for neuropsychiatric disorders. We also introduce the Organization for Imaging Genomics in Infancy (ORIGINs), a working group of the ENIGMA (Enhancing NeuroImaging Genetics through Meta-Analysis) consortium, which was established to facilitate large-scale imaging-genetics studies in infancy and early childhood.

Introduction

Imaging genetics reveals considerable information about genetic influences on structural and functional imaging phenotypes(1–3), but until recently largely focused on adolescent or adult human brain(4,5). This is an important limitation as the most dynamic phase of human brain development is from embryonic life through early childhood(6) (Figure 1). Disrupted gene expression in this period can produce life-long changes in brain morphology and function. Even common genetic variations may affect early neurodevelopmental processes, thereby increasing

risk for psychiatric conditions later in life(7). These effects may be detectable in early life via neuroimaging, providing opportunities for identifying at-risk populations in infancy for primary prevention, and developing interventions to adjust adverse trajectories earlier in the clinical sequence. This paper reviews empirical evidence underlying this hypothesis focusing on magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Studies using ultrasound(8,9) and studies integrating imaging and epigenetic data(10–13) also provide insights into how genes influence the developing young brain but are beyond the scope of this review. First, we describe heritability of brain imaging phenotypes in early life. We then discuss candidate gene studies of brain structure, function, and connectivity. Next, we review studies characterizing associations between psychiatric risk genes and brain phenotypes in early life using polygenic scores. We then discuss genome-wide studies on brain imaging phenotypes in early childhood. Finally, we introduce the Organization for Imaging Genomics of Infancy (ORIGINs), a working group of the Enhancing NeuroImaging Genetics through Meta-Analysis (ENIGMA) consortium, which was established to facilitate large-scale imaging-genetics studies in infancy and early childhood.

Insert Figure 1 around Here

Heritability

Twin studies reveal that many brain phenotypes are heritable in early infancy. Genetic effects explain around 85% of variance in global white-matter volumes (WMV) and 56% variance in global gray-matter volumes (GMV), around 1 month of age(14), while heritability of head size is negligible(15). This contrasts with studies of older children and adults where heritabilities greater than 80% are reported for all three phenotypes (global WMV, GMV, and head size)(16–18). Heritability estimates for global cortical surface area (SA) are high in early infancy (78%), while estimates for global cortical thickness (CT) are lower (29%) with significant genetic overlap

between the two(19). This differs from adults where SA and CT are both highly heritable (89% and 81% respectively) with distinct genetic factors contributing to each measure(20–22). White matter microstructure is moderately heritable in early life with 30-60% of variability in mean fractional anisotropy (FA) linked to genetic variation, and similar estimates for other diffusivity indices (23,24). In adults estimates for FA range from 72%-88%(25). Despite large variations in heritability estimates across individual tracts, a single latent measure of white matter microstructure accounts for much heritable variation in neonates (50%)(26). Similarly, individual differences in regional CT and SA appear to be driven by a common set of genetic factors influencing cortical structure at the global level(19). In both cases, the pattern of results mirrors temporal changes in gene expression which show strong spatial differences in fetal, but not postnatal development(27,28). Finally, genetic effects on resting state functional magnetic resonance imaging (rsfMRI) phenotypes, have been observed in the first two years of life. Gao and colleagues(29) reported modest genetic effects on within network connectivity in neonates with three visual networks and the right frontoparietal network demonstrating above-average effects. At one year, the most heritable networks were bilateral frontoparietal networks, the salience network, and two visual networks. At two years, genetic effects were strongest for the auditory network. However, genetic effects were not as strong as those reported in adolescents and adults(30–32). Genetic effects on between network connectivity are also minimal in neonates(33). Intergenerational transmission of imaging phenotypes has been reported and likely reflects a combination of genetic, epigenetic, and environmental effects(34–36). One such study examined the intergenerational transmission from mothers to their five-year-old children and reported significant effects on sulcal phenotypes in right frontal and parietal cortex(35).

A recurring theme across studies is that heritability is higher in adulthood compared to infancy. This might appear paradoxical as interindividual variation in environmental exposures increases with age, but similar patterns are observed for IQ, where increasing heritability during development is called the Wilson effect(37). The Wilson effect is thought to arise from gene–environment correlations that increase with age. In other words, babies and young children have environments thrust upon them, but as they age, they select, modify, and create environments correlated with their genetic predispositions(38). Alternatively, higher heritability observed at later ages could reflect stronger heritability of postnatal processes such as myelination and shifts in proportions of white versus gray matter across development. Determining whether a genetic amplification model applies to neuroimaging phenotypes will require large scale longitudinal studies addressing gene-environment interplay across lifespan. The ENIGMA plasticity working group has begun tackling this question. Using five longitudinal twin cohorts, they demonstrated that rates of brain change are heritable and heritability estimates of change rates were higher in adults than children(39). They subsequently identified variants involved in structural brain changes via a genome-wide association study (GWAS)(40). However, their studies did not include infants or toddlers.

Candidate gene approaches

Traditional candidate gene studies test for associations between phenotypic outcomes and variation within specific genes, selected for suspected roles in organ development or physiology. In imaging genetics, selection is often based on hypothesized involvement in psychiatric disease. The first candidate gene study of brain imaging phenotypes in neonates focused on global and local brain tissue volumes and several genes with known roles in brain development and putative links to psychiatric disease including *DISC1*, *COMT*, *NRG1*, *ESR1*, and *BDNF*(41). Many reported effects

mirrored findings in adults; others were unique to infancy. For the *BDNF* Val/Met polymorphism, Met+ neonates had decreased volumes in regions of right occipital cortex, left hippocampus, parahippocampus, fusiform gyrus, and inferior temporal gyrus and increased volumes in motor and somatosensory cortex(41). We highlight this result as a recent study partially replicated the original findings. Specifically, Kawasaki et al. (2021) reported that Met+ neonates had significantly smaller relative hippocampal volumes(42).

The largest traditional candidate gene study to include children under 6 years of age focused on *Klotho*, a gene linked to age-related decline. A significant interaction between *Klotho* allele status (rs9536314) and age was observed for total brain volume (TBV) and total GMV with KLS-VS heterozygotes having larger volumes in early childhood, but not in later childhood/adolescence. Among girls, KL-VS heterozygotes had smaller WMV than non-carriers whereas among boys, heterozygotes had greater WMV than non-carriers. No effects were significant in a replication cohort that did not include children below 6 years of age(43), supporting the importance of conducting imaging genetics studies in early life to unveil effects absent in older cohorts.

In addition to age, genetic effects on neurodevelopment may vary based on factors such as prematurity and family history. For example, Krishnan et al. 2017(44) hypothesized that polymorphisms in *DLG4*, would moderate responses to perinatal inflammation and their impact on white matter microstructure based on gene network analysis of the microglial transcriptomic response to injury in mouse models and complementary, data-driven analysis of protein-protein interactions, transcription factors and human brain gene expression. The team discovered a specific variant in *DLG4* (rs17203281) associated with FA in preterm individuals in two independent cohorts. Van Steenwinckel et al. (2019) adopted a similar approach, identifying key genes and gene networks in animal models of neuroinflammation-induced hypomyelination and then testing

for associations in preterm infants. The researchers revealed that Wnt pathway genes were collectively associated with cerebral structural connectivity(45). In addition, a study of 13 candidate genes revealed *ARVCF*, previously linked to schizophrenia, and *FADS2*, previously linked to intelligence, were associated with white matter FA in preterm infants(46). These studies highlight the importance of considering potential interactions between genetic variation and early life environmental exposures as neither *DLG4* nor the Wnt pathway genes would be expected to impact DTI phenotypes in the absence of perinatal inflammation. With regard to family history, Douet et al. (2015) reported that the effects of variants in *ERBB4* differed in children with and without a family history of schizophrenia and/or bipolar disorder. The TT variant for rs7598440 had more pronounced effects on age-related changes (3-20 years) in CT and SA in children with a family history; these children showed steeper increases in frontal and temporal SA in both early and late childhood(47).

Several studies explicitly tested for gene-environment interactions using the candidate gene approach. *COMT* SNPs moderated the association between antenatal maternal anxiety and prefrontal and parietal CT in neonates(48). *BDNF* genotype (Val66Met) moderates associations between methylation patterns and neonatal hippocampus and amygdala volumes(49). *FKBP5*, which regulates the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, moderates the association between antenatal maternal depressive symptoms and neonatal right hippocampal volume(50). For oxytocin receptor (*OTR*) gene variant rs53576, a sex-specific main effect was seen for neonatal hippocampal volume. Left hippocampal volumes were larger in GG-homozygotes compared to A-allele carriers in boys only. Prenatal maternal anxiety interacted with genotype in both sexes: higher maternal anxiety was associated with larger hippocampal volumes in A-allele carriers(51).

Additional details on these studies are found in Table 1. A graphical representation (PhenoGram)(52) of genes and associated phenotypes are given in Figure 2.

Insert Table 1 around Here

Interestingly, imaging genetics studies of infants and young children began at a time when microarray genotyping began making large-scale genotyping practical. The GWAS era quickly highlighted weaknesses in the traditional candidate gene approach. Well-powered GWAS failed to support involvement of many traditional candidate genes for psychiatric disorders. This may partly reflect addressable methodological weaknesses including failure to control for population stratification thereby increasing the risk of false positive associations due to differences in ancestry. However, the key disadvantage of candidate gene approach is likely poor candidate selection, given inadequate knowledge about underlying biological processes. Subsequent meta-analyses of candidate gene studies relevant to psychiatry, including imaging genetics studies in older populations, revealed poor replicability, false positive associations, overestimation of effect sizes, and publication bias(53). While imaging genetics literature for infants and young children is not extensive enough to allow meta-analyses, existing studies likely have similar weaknesses.

One promising approach to addressing these problems is to focus future studies on variants robustly associated with mental and neurological disorders or adult brain imaging phenotypes in large-scale GWAS. The $\epsilon 4$ allele of apolipoprotein E (*APOE*) gene meets this criterion. Not only is $\epsilon 4$ the strongest known risk variant for Alzheimer's, it also has well documented effects on brain structure and cognition in healthy individuals(54,55). In neonates, *APOE* $\epsilon 3\epsilon 4$ heterozygotes have significantly lower volumes in temporal regions, compared with $\epsilon 3$ homozygotes, and lower volume in frontal and parietal lobes. $\epsilon 3\epsilon 4$ heterozygotes have significantly greater volumes in specific parietal, frontal, and occipital areas(41). Infant $\epsilon 4$ carriers have lower white matter myelin

water fraction (MWF) and GMV measurements in precuneus, posterior/middle cingulate, lateral temporal, and medial occipitotemporal regions, areas preferentially affected by Alzheimer disease, and greater MWF and GMV measurements in frontal regions(56). Decreased myelin in $\epsilon 4$ carriers in the corticospinal tract, splenium of corpus callosum, and frontal white matter, observed in the previous study, was also reported in a longitudinal analysis from the same group following children from birth to 5.5 years(57). Regions in which $\epsilon 4$ carriers had greater MWF early on had decreased rate of MWF development until 5.5 years allowing non-carriers to catch-up and surpass $\epsilon 4$ carriers around 3 years of age. In another study, age-related changes in brain structures and cognition were observed to vary depending on genotype, with smallest hippocampi in $\epsilon 2\epsilon 4$ children, lowest hippocampal FA in younger $\epsilon 4\epsilon 4$ children, largest medial orbitofrontal cortical areas in $\epsilon 3\epsilon 4$ children, and age-dependent thinning of entorhinal cortex in $\epsilon 4\epsilon 4$ children(58). All these studies suggest Alzheimer's disease is a neurodevelopmental disorder as well as a neurodegenerative one. Six SNPs robustly associated with subcortical volumes in adult GWAS have recently been tested for effects in neonates. An association between rs945270 (an intergenic locus downstream of Kinectin 1 (*KTNI*) gene) and putamen volume was reported suggesting that at least some variants have detectable effects across the lifespan(59).

A significant challenge when performing a candidate gene study informed by existing GWAS is how to prioritize genes for follow-up. Fortunately, an increasing array of in silico tools for searching GWAS literature and performing functional characterization of variants can assist with this task(60–62). Another challenge is that candidate gene studies informed by GWAS still focus on only a few selected genes/polymorphisms which account for only a fraction of variants involved in psychiatric risk. One approach to overcome this challenge is to use polygenic risk scores.

Polygenic Risk Score Approaches

Polygenic risk scores (PRS) estimate an individual's susceptibility to a complex trait based on prior GWAS summary statistics(63). Efforts such as the Psychiatric GWAS consortium have produced many well-powered GWAS of psychiatric and neurodevelopmental conditions including schizophrenia, major depressive disorder (MDD), bipolar disorder (BIP), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorders (ASD)(64). Summary statistics are often freely available, and researchers can obtain individual data from controlled-access repositories. By examining associations between PRS and neuroimaging phenotypes measured in infancy and early childhood, researchers are clarifying how genetic risk for these conditions manifests in early life thereby providing new insights into the etiology of psychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders. This is a key step in identifying individuals who may benefit from early intervention.

One of the first studies to use this approach in early life was Xia et al. (2017) who found that PRS for schizophrenia and ASD were not associated with neonatal TBV(65). Like the above study, Cullen et al. (2022) did not observe associations between neonatal volumes and PRS for schizophrenia. However, PRS for schizophrenia was negatively associated with regional GMV and WMV and total WMV in neonates in a different study(66). PRS for ASD was associated with greater CT and reduced white matter connectivity in children (3 to ~14 years)(67). In preterm infants, a PRS for five conditions (ASD, ADHD, BIP, MDD, and schizophrenia) predicted reduced volume of the lentiform nucleus, which plays a key role in motor control, cognition, and emotion(68). The authors hypothesized that genetic risk for psychiatric disorders increased vulnerability to abnormal lentiform development in the context of perinatal stress associated with preterm birth but did not include term infants for comparison. Other studies have used PRS to

probe relationships between early-life adversity, genetic risk, and neurodevelopment. Ursini et al. (2021) used transcriptomic data to create placental genomic risk scores (PlacGRS) for schizophrenia. PlacGRS were calculated like traditional PRS, but only used markers in genes highly expressed in placenta and differentially expressed in placentae from complicated, compared with normal, pregnancies. PlacGRS negatively associated with neonatal brain volume in children with perinatal complications, especially in males(69). No significant associations were observed for PlacGRSs and non-placental GRSs for other disorders and traits associated with early life complications, suggesting the link between placental biology, genetic risk, perinatal environmental risk, and early brain development outcomes is relatively unique to schizophrenia.

Another important perinatal stressor is maternal depression. Many studies report associations of maternal depressive symptoms with neuroimaging outcomes in early life, but it is unclear whether associations represent causal effects or arise from genetic confounding. PRS can be used to test independent effects of maternal depressive symptoms and genetic risk for MDD as well as their interaction. Qiu et al. (2017), the first to apply this approach, reported significant interactions between PRS for MDD and antenatal maternal depressive symptoms for right amygdala volume in Asian (GUSTO) and US neonates(70). However, direction of effect differed across cohorts. In Finland, Acosta et al. (2020) found similar patterns to the US cohort(71). However, the interaction became nonsignificant after multiple comparisons correction. The Finnish team also investigated associations of MDD PRS with infant striatal volumes and found sex-specific effects: MDD PRS was positively associated with caudate volumes in boys but negatively associated with caudate volumes in girls(72). They did not observe significant interaction effects of PRS with prenatal maternal depressive symptoms for any dorsal striatal volumes.

PRS can also be used to understand how molecular pathways shape individual differences in neurodevelopment. For example, PRS for serum testosterone was recently found to positively associate with total SA development in female infants(73). Researchers interested in this application of PRS may implement expression based PRS (ePRS) rather than traditional PRS. ePRS integrate genotype data with transcriptomic data to predict expression levels of a particular gene or gene network. Morgunova et al. (2021) used this approach to investigate relationships between a coexpression network of the *DCC* gene, which is robustly associated with multiple psychiatric conditions, and TBV in both neonates and older children(74). Higher ePRS for the *DCC* coexpression network were associated with larger brain volumes. A study from GUSTO investigated how genes involved in inflammation interact with maternal depression to shape neonatal brain morphology. They created separate ePRS for 22 cytokine and chemokine genes expressed in fetal brain and found ePRS for *TNFRSF19*, *IL17RB*, *BMPRI1B*, *IL1RAP*, and *CXCR4* moderated impact of maternal depression on specific subcortical volumes and regional CT(75). Using longitudinal data from the same cohort, investigators revealed an age dependent involvement for transmembrane receptor (*TGF- β*) variants in moderating effects of prenatal maternal depressive symptoms on amygdala volume(76).

Finally, PRS have been used to investigate how genetic variants linked to adult and adolescent brain morphology influence early brain development. Xia et al. (2017) found PRS for WMV and GMV in adolescence showed positive associations with neonatal WMV and GMV respectively, though the overall proportion of variation explained was low (65). Morgunova et al. (2021) calculated PRS for brain volume using data from UK Biobank, ENIGMA, Cohorts for Heart and Aging Research in Genomic Epidemiology (CHARGE), and the Early Growth Genetics consortia(74). These PRS did not predict brain volume in their neonate and school age community

cohorts. The first large-scale GWAS of adult ICV tested whether a polygenic score generated from 7 genome-wide significant loci predicted head growth in children of European ancestry followed prenatally until 6 years of age(77). They found an age-dependent effect in which the PRS became more predictive in older children, suggesting adult brain volume is strongly shaped by genetic influences operating in early childhood. Cullen et al. (2022) found robust associations between PRS for adult brainstem, hippocampus, putamen, and thalamus volumes and neonatal volumes, suggesting some stability across the life course(59).

Reviewed studies highlight the potential of PRS-based investigations of neuroimaging phenotypes in infancy and early childhood (See Table 2). They also reveal the importance of considering effects of sex and ancestry. A major limitation with this approach is the lack of sufficiently powered GWAS in non-European populations. European-ancestry GWAS do not transfer well to other ancestries and can lead to unpredictable biases(78). Another limitation of PRS studies is that they are based on existing GWAS and hence limited by the power of current datasets. In other words, PRS-based studies, like candidate gene studies, are constrained by current biological knowledge. To fully understand how DNA variants influence brain development, well-powered GWAS of infants and young children encompassing multiple ancestries are needed.

Insert Table 2 around Here

Genome-wide association studies (GWAS)

GWAS being hypothesis free, can identify new associations and overturn prior assumptions. However, GWAS of neuroimaging outcomes in infants and young children are very limited. The first GWAS of healthy infants identified several common variants associated with neonatal brain structure(65). An intronic SNP in *IGFBP7* was significantly associated with GMV. An intronic SNP in *WWOX* fell just short of genome-wide significance for WMV. Many top associations

tagged transcriptional regulators expressed during brain development (*KLF13*, *LMCD1*, *TOX3* and *TBX4*). This study also compared their results to large-scale neuroimaging GWAS in adolescents and adults and concluded that genetic determinants of global brain volumes are highly distinct at different ages. In a subsequent GWAS of white matter microstructure in neonates, an intronic SNP in *PSMF1* was significantly associated with a tractography-based factor capturing shared variation in FA across 44 white matter bundles(26). Additional loci nearing genome-wide significance were in or near genes with roles in axon growth and guidance, fasciculation, and myelination including *B3GAT1*, *TENM2*, *NFATC1*, and *MAP3K13*. The above studies are first of their kind and replication is crucial. Furthermore, these studies were not large enough to generate stable SNP-wise heritability estimates or evaluate genomic correlations between infant neuroimaging phenotypes and psychiatric disorders.

A smaller study in preterm individuals used genome-wide data and pathway-based and network-based approaches(79). The PPAR (peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor) signaling pathway was found to have a role in white matter development with five genes implicated (*AQP7*, *ME1*, *PLIN1*, *SLC27A1*, *ACAA1*). This inspired the team to examine the PPAR pathway in a larger cohort of preterm children. Using machine-learning analysis they uncovered 3 genes associated with cerebral connectivity (*PPARG*, *ITGA6*, and *FXR1*)(80). GWAS studies are summarized in Table 3 and included in the Figure 2 PhenoGram(52). Gene functions and associated neurological phenotypes/conditions for candidate genes and genes identified via GWAS are provided in Table 4.

Insert Table 3 & 4 around Here

Insert Figure 2 around Here

General strengths and limitations of GWAS studies are reviewed in detail elsewhere(81). In terms of GWAS in infants and young children, the primary limitations of existing studies include 1) under-powered due to small samples, 2) mostly cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, 3) only focused on neonates and preterm infants, and 4) while not specifically excluding individuals of non-European ancestry, these individuals constitute a small proportion of the total samples.

Rigor and reproducibility

When we consider the rigor and reproducibility of published imaging genetics studies in infants and young children, insufficient power and sample size are significant concerns. Sample sizes for early childhood imaging genetic studies are low with a mean of 365 for candidate gene studies (median – 216), 225 for PRS based studies (median – 168), and 344 for GWAS (median – 371.5). Consequently, existing studies are powered to detect variants with large effect sizes. It is likely that most variants impacting infant brain imaging phenotypes will explain between 0.1%-1% of variance, like other complex traits(82). Furthermore, small samples can produce unstable results and homogenous sampling can generate statistical inferences that do not represent the overall population. Independent replication is essential to validate results and improve estimation of effects but is currently rare due to difficulties recruiting and scanning large groups of infants.

To improve rigor and reproducibility and fully understand how DNA variants influence brain development in infancy and early childhood across diverse populations, and implications for future research and clinical care, large, longitudinal studies are needed. The Organization for Imaging Genomics of Infancy (ORIGINs) was founded to facilitate such work.

Organization for Imaging Genomics of Infancy (ORIGINs)

ORIGINs include investigators from different centers around the world (16 sites, 19 cohorts, 5 countries) who are engaged in neuroimaging research in infancy and early childhood. Our goal is to determine how genetic and environmental factors influence development of brain morphometry, anatomical and functional connectivity, and cognitive and emotional function from birth to age 6. In 2020, we received NIH funding to create the largest-ever imaging-genomics dataset focused on infancy and early childhood. In subsequent sections we briefly describe who will be included in this dataset, what is being measured, and our data analysis plans.

Participants:

Subjects will include approximately 6809 children (birth to 6 years of age) participating in neuroimaging studies of early brain development at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (UNC), University of California Irvine (UCI), Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Rhode Island Hospital, Northwestern University, University of Denver, University of Rochester, Magee-Women's Hospital of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, University of Cape Town, Boston's Children Hospital/Harvard University, University of Minnesota, University of Washington, Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL), Kings College London, and National University of Singapore. 8 cohorts have completed initial data collection and 11 are actively scanning. We estimate that 49% of the sample will be male, 51% will be female, 62% will be White, 20% will be Black, 11% will be Asian, 6% will be more than one ancestry, and 0.05% will be American Indian, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, or Pacific Islanders. Individuals identifying as Hispanic/Latinx are expected to make up 15% of the cohort.

Data Measurements

Demographic and medical history: Health history and demographic information of participants were provided by parents or guardians and/or extracted from medical records. The information includes birth outcomes (gestational age, birthweight), sex, socioeconomic factors (maternal education, total family income), and family history of medical and neuropsychiatric disorders.

Genomic data: Most participating sites have used/are using saliva samples for DNA extraction. Two cohorts (DCHS and GUSTO) used umbilical cord and venous blood specimens. To harmonize data across genotyping platforms, we will impute genomes to a common set of SNPs using the Michigan Imputation Server(113). See supplementary materials for details on harmonization and genotyping platforms used by each cohort.

Behavioral assessments: In a subset of participants (~3800), we will examine 3 behavioral traits – impulsivity/distractibility, anxiety, and aggressive behavior – that can be reliably measured in very young children and are relevant to multiple psychiatric disorders. Behavioral traits will be measured using age-appropriate versions of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)(114) and Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2)(115,116).

Image acquisition and quality control: All cohorts, except for the developing Human Connectome Project (dHCP) and GUSTO, use 3T Siemens scanners (Allegra, Tim Trio, Verio, Skyra and Prisma) and comparable sequences (Supplementary Table 3-6). dHCP data was acquired on a Philips Achieva and newborn T2 structural MRI acquisition for GUSTO was on a 1.5T GE. To ensure consistent processing across datasets with the same tools and appropriately standardized parameter settings, all structural, diffusion, and functional connectivity data will be processed at a central site. T1 and T2 structural MRI, DTI and rsfMRI acquisition parameters, platform, and harmonization pipeline for each site are detailed in supplementary material.

Data analysis plan: Extracted neuroimaging measures will be analyzed using non-linear growth models. Growth model parameters, which we refer to as “developmental imaging phenotypes” (DIPs) will be used to test effects of genetic variants on structural brain development and connectivity using a multi-variate GWAS approach. Canonical correlation analysis will be used to identify association patterns between genetically influenced neurodevelopmental traits and clinically salient behaviors. The data analysis and data sharing plan is detailed in the supplementary material. A schematic for data analysis is provided as Figure 3.

Insert Figure 3 around Here

Conclusions

Imaging genetic studies of infants and young children provide evidence that variants associated with psychiatric disorders influence early neurodevelopment both independently and through interactions with environmental factors. In addition, GWAS studies of neonates and preterm infants have revealed new genes, variants, and molecular pathways implicated in brain development. However, most findings have not been independently replicated. Existing studies, regardless of design, are relatively small and do not encompass diverse ancestries. The ORIGINS initiative is addressing these limitations by creating and harmonizing the largest and most diverse imaging genomics dataset focused on infancy and early childhood to date. This dataset will help reveal how genetic risk for psychiatric disease manifests across infancy and early childhood, in terms of brain structure and function, and assist in early identification of at-risk individuals. Ultimately, identifying genes and molecular pathways associated with early neuroimaging phenotypes could lead to the development of novel prophylactics against complex psychiatric illness.

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Figure Legends

Figure 1: Early neurodevelopment is a sensitive period for accumulating transdiagnostic risk for psychiatric disorders. Neurodevelopment in human brain begins from approximately two weeks after conception. Neurogenesis and neural migration are primarily prenatal processes, and neurite outgrowth is minimal after 4 years of age. Myelination and synaptic pruning continue beyond 6 years of age (indicated by the small arrows). Genetic influences on these various processes contribute to psychiatric risk which accumulates across development and may not manifest until later in life (large orange arrow).

Figure 2: Phenogram of genes associated with brain imaging phenotypes in infants and young children from candidate gene studies site and GWAS. ICV – Intracranial volume; WM FA – White matter fractional anisotropy; TBV – Total brain volume; GMV- Gray matter volume; WMV – White matter volume; CT- Cortical thickness; WM MWF – White matter myelin water fraction; SA –Surface Area.

Figure 3: Data analysis plan for the ORIGINS

Table 1: Candidate gene studies of imaging phenotypes in infancy and childhood

Article	Participants (N)	Age group	Ancestry	Gene/SNP - Brain Phenotype association	Findings
<i>Studies on Genetic Effects</i>					
Knickmeyer et al., 2014 (41)	272	Neonates (gestational age at MRI: 261-433 days)	Maternal ethnicity - white	<i>ESRI</i> (rs9340799) - ICV; <i>DISC1</i> (rs821616), <i>COMT</i> , <i>NRG1</i> , <i>APOE</i> , <i>ESRI</i> (rs9340799), and <i>BDNF</i> - GMV	Associations in <i>DISC1</i> and <i>COMT</i> mirrored findings in adults.
Dean et al., 2014 (56)	162	2- to 25-month-old infants	Not reported	<i>APOE</i> ϵ 4 allele - \downarrow MWF and GMV in precuneus, posterior/middle cingulate, lateral temporal, and medial occipitotemporal regions. <i>APOE</i> ϵ 4 allele - \uparrow MWF and GMV in extensive frontal regions	Infant apolipoprotein E (<i>APOE</i>) ϵ 4 allele carriers had lower white matter myelin water fraction (MWF) and gray matter volume (GMV) measurements than noncarriers in areas preferentially affected by Alzheimer disease
Boardman et al., 2014 (46)	83 preterm infants	Neonates (post menstrual age 23+2 to 32+6 weeks)	Multi ancestry	<i>ARVCF</i> (rs2518824) and <i>FADS2</i> (rs174576) - White matter FA	
Douet et al., 2015 (47)	971 (PING study)	3-20 years	Multi ancestry	<i>ERBB4</i> (rs7598440) – Cortical structures	In the full sample children with the TT- genotype had smaller SA in the occipital and temporal lobes at ages less than 5 years. When stratifying by family history of schizophrenia and/or bipolar TT children show steeper increases in frontal SA in early childhood.

Chang et al., 2016 (58)	1187 (PING study)	3 to 20 years	Multi ancestry	<i>APOE</i> ($\epsilon 2\epsilon 4$ - ↓ Hippocampus; $\epsilon 4\epsilon 4$ - ↓ hippocampal FA; $\epsilon 3\epsilon 4$ - ↑ medial orbitofrontal cortical areas)	The $\epsilon 4\epsilon 4$ and $\epsilon 2\epsilon 4$ genotypes may negatively influence brain development and brain aging at the extremes of age
Krishnan et al., 2017 (44)	preterm infants (cohort 1: n = 70; cohort 2 (EPRIME study): n = 271)	cohort 1 - mean postmenstrual age at scan 40+3 weeks; cohort 2 - mean postmenstrual age at scan 42+4 weeks	Multi ancestry	<i>DLG4</i> (rs17203281) - FA	<i>DLG4</i> (rs17203281) was associated with structural white matter changes
Steenwinckel et al., 2019 (45)	290 preterm infants (EPRIME study)	gestational age of 38.29 to 58.28 weeks	Multi ancestry	<i>NFATC4</i> , <i>CSNK1A1</i> , <i>MAPK10</i> , <i>WNT2B</i> , <i>SMAD3</i> , <i>FBXW11</i> , <i>NLK</i> , <i>CSNK1A1L</i> , <i>PLCB2</i> and <i>WNT5A</i> - White matter structural connectivity	Genomic variation in the Wnt pathway is associated with the levels of connectivity found in their brains.
De Vries et al., 2020 (43)	1387 (PING study)	3–21 years	Multi ancestry	Klotho allele KL-VS; KL -CS X age interaction - TBV, TGMV; KI-VS X Sex - TWMV	A replication in a cohort of 2306 children aged 6–12 years (Generation R sample) showed no significant associations. KL-VS's influence may depend on age and sex.

Remer et al., 2020 (57)	223	2–68 months	Multi ancestry	<i>APOE</i> $\epsilon 4$ carriers - MWF	$\epsilon 4$ carriers - significant MWF trajectory differences in multiple neuroanatomical locations
Kawasaki et al., 2021 (42)	66	Newborn infants (37.9–47.6 postmenstrual weeks)	Multi ancestry	<i>BDNF</i> -Val66Met variant – hippocampi, amygdalae, TWMMV	Met + group - ↓hippocampi, amygdalae, age-dependent declines in % total white matter volumes, slower age-dependent declines in total brain volumes
Cullen et al., 2022 (59)	208(dHCP study)	0- 6 weeks	European	rs945270 (intergenic locus downstream of the Kinectin 1 (<i>KTNI</i>) gene) - Putamen volume	greater number of C alleles associated with larger volume
<i>Studies on interaction between genetic and environmental effect</i>					
Qiu et al., 2015 (48)	146 (GUSTO cohort)	Neonates (5 to 17 days)	Asian	<i>COMT</i> - cortical thickness	<i>COMT</i> SNPs (val158met, rs737865 and rs165599) - role in moderating the relationship of antenatal maternal anxiety with dorsolateral prefrontal and parietal cortical thickness in neonates.
Chen et al., 2015 (49)	237 (GUSTO)	Neonates (4–17 days)	Asian	<i>BDNF</i> (Val66Met) - hippocampus, amygdala	<i>BDNF</i> (Val66Met) - regulate the sensitivity of the methylome with differential effects on amygdala and hippocampal volume
Wang et al., 2017 (50)	164 Mother-offspring dyads (GUSTO)	Neonates (5 to 14 days)	Asian	<i>FKBP5</i> - Hippocampus	17 SNPs in the <i>FKBP5</i> gene showed significant interaction effects with antenatal maternal depressive symptoms on right hippocampal volume

Acosta et al., 2021 (51)	105	11–54 days old	European	<i>OTR</i> rs53576 X Sex - Hippocampus	For oxytocin receptor (<i>OTR</i>) SNP rs53576, in boys compared to girls, left hippocampal volumes were significantly larger in GG-homozygotes compared to A-allele carriers. Higher maternal anxiety was associated both with larger hippocampal volumes in A-allele carriers than GG-homozygotes.
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Table 2: Polygenic risk score (PRS) studies of imaging phenotypes in infancy and childhood

Article	Participants (N)	Age group	Ancestry	PRS	Findings
<i>Studies on main genetic effects</i>					
Xia et al., 2017 (65)	561	6-161 days	Multi ancestry	a) polygenic scores for GM and WM from adolescent cohort; polygenic scores for ICV from adolescent and adult cohort b) PRS for schizophrenia and ASD	a) Adolescent WM and GM scores showed positive associations with neonatal WM and GM; Adult polygenic scores for ICV did not predict neonatal ICV b) PRS did not predict global brain volumes.
Cullen et al., 2019 (68)	194 preterm infants	mean postmenstrual age at scan 42.6 weeks	Multi ancestry	(68)PRS from meta-analysis of genome-wide SNP data for five psychiatric disorders (autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, and schizophrenia)	↑PRS - ↓lentiform volume in the mixed ancestral cohort and a European subsample.
Khundrakpam et al., 2020 (67)	391 (PING study)	3-21 years	Multi ancestry	PRS for ASD	↑ PRS for autism spectrum disorder - ↑ cortical thickness for a large age span starting from 3 years up to ~14 years in several cortical regions localized in bilateral precentral gyri and the left hemispheric postcentral gyrus and precuneus, ↓white matter connectivity between the frontal and parietal regions
Morgunova et al., 2021 (74)	142	Neonates (27 ± 13 days)	Multi ancestry	Expression-based polygenic risk score (ePRS) was created based on the DCC coexpression gene	↑ ePRS - ↑ total brain volume (grey and white matter, adjusted by intracranial volume).

network in the prefrontal cortex (PFC)					
Alex et al., 2021 (73)	430	Birth – 2 years	European	PRS for serum testosterone	↑ PRS- ↑ SA development over time in female infants.
Cullen et al., 2022 (59)	208	0- 6 weeks	European	a) Genome-wide polygenic scores (GPSs) for adult subcortical brain volumes b) GPSs for psychiatric disorders autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, and cross-disorder (including eight psychiatric disorders: anorexia nervosa, ADHD, ASD, bipolar disorder, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, and Tourette syndrome)	a) neonatal volumes of hippocampus, brainstem, putamen, and thalamus associated with adult GPS b) None of the neonatal brain volumes showed an association with psychiatric GPS
Le et al., 2022 (66)	257	postmenstrual age at scan 38 - 45 weeks	prelim analysis: European; secondary; European and Asian	PRS for Schizophrenia	↑PRS - ↓ right frontal lobe white matter, ↓grey and white matter superior temporal gyrus volumes and ↓total white matter volume
<i>Studies on interaction between genetic and environmental risk</i>					

Qiu et al., 2017 (70)	168 (GUSTO) and 85 (US) mother– infant dyads	Neonates: GUSTO (5– 14 days), US (Post- Conceptual Age at the MRI visit 43.02 ± 2.1 weeks)	GUSTO - Asian; US - mixed ancestry	Genomic profile risk score for major depressive disorder (GPRSMDD)	Significant interaction was observed between antenatal maternal depressive symptoms and infant GPRSMDD on right hippocampal volume in Asian cohort and right amygdala volume in both cohorts. Significant interaction between SES and infant GPRSMDD on the right amygdala and hippocampal volumes and shapes in the Asian cohort.
Wang et al., 2017 (50)	164 Mother- offspring dyads (GUSTO)	Neonates (5 to 14 days)	Asian	A genetic risk score was calculated for individual neonates by summing the number of minor alleles of 19 FKBP5 SNPs	Neonates with the genetic risk score lower than or equal to its median showed a positive association between antenatal maternal depressive symptoms and the right hippocampal volume. Neonates with the genetic risk score greater than its median showed a negative association between antenatal maternal depressive symptoms and the right hippocampal volume.
Acosta et al., 2020 (71)	105	11–54 days old	European	PRS MDD	A nonsignificant interaction effect between polygenic risk scores for major depressive disorder (PRS-MDD) and prenatal maternal depressive symptoms on right amygdala volume was observed.
Acosta et al.,2020 (72)	105	11–54 days old	European	PRS MDD	No significant interaction effects of PRS- MDD with prenatal maternal depressive symptoms were found for infant dorsal striatal volumes. PRS-MDD was more positively associated with caudate volumes in boys compared to girls.

Wu et al., 2020 (75)	161 mother– child dyads (GUSTO)	Neonates (5– 14 days)	Asian	A genetic expression score (GES) was calculated for individuals by summing the number of minor alleles across the SNPs of the gene that were highly correlated with its expression level according to the existing expression quantitative trait loci (eQTL) database.	Positive associations of prenatal maternal depressive symptoms with the hippocampal volume, auditory and prefrontal cortical thickness in neonates high in GESs of the TNF, IL-1, IL17, chemokine, and TGF family and receptors.
Ursini et al., 2021 (69)	242	10-60 days	European	Fractionated genomic risk scores for schizophrenia based on placental gene-expression loci (PlacGRSs)	↑PlacGRSs -↓ neonatal brain volume in singletons and offspring of multiple pregnancies with a history of early-life complications.
Qiu et al., 2021 (76)	162 (GUSTO)	Birth – 6 years	Asian	genetic expression score (GES) was calculated for individuals by summing the number of alleles across the SNPs of the gene that was correlated with TGF-βRI expression level according to the existing expression quantitative trait loci (eQTL) database	In neonates with a high GES of <i>TGF-βRI</i> , higher levels of prenatal maternal depressive symptoms were associated with a smaller right amygdala volume. In children with a low GES of <i>TGF-βRI</i> , greater prenatal maternal depressive symptoms predicted greater left and right amygdala volumes at 6 years of age.

Table 3: Genome wide association studies of imaging phenotypes in infancy and childhood

Article	Participants (N)	Age group	Ancestry	Findings
Krishnan et al., 2016 (79)	72 preterm infants	Gestational age 23 + 2 to 32 + 6 weeks	Multi ancestry	Identified significant role for lipid pathways, and PPAR (peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor) signaling in influencing development of white matter in preterm infants. Five genes were found to be highly associated with the phenotype: <i>AQP7</i> , <i>ME1</i> , <i>PLIN1</i> , <i>SLC27A1</i> , and <i>ACAA1</i> .
Krishnan et al., 2017 (80)	272 preterm infants	gestational age 42 wk+4d	Multi ancestry	<i>PPARG</i> (six SNPs), <i>ITGA6</i> (four SNPs), <i>FXR1</i> (two SNPs) are associated with preterm cerebral endophenotype, particularly insular cortex
Xia et al., 2017 (65)	561	6-161 days	Multi ancestry	An intronic* single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) in <i>IGFBP7</i> (rs114518130) achieved genome-wide significance for gray matter volume. An intronic SNP in <i>WWOX</i> (rs10514437) neared genome-wide significance for white matter volume.
Zhang et al., 2021 (26)	471	Neonates (days post conception 293.4 ± 16.6)	Multi ancestry	An intronic SNP in the gene <i>PSMF1</i> was significant for a tractography-based factor that captured shared variation in fractional anisotropy across 44 white matter bundles.

*Intronic SNPs are located in a segment of a DNA or RNA molecule which does not code for proteins and interrupts the sequence of genes.

Table 4: Brain imaging phenotype associated gene, their function, and associated neurologic phenotype/disorder

Gene	Abbreviation	Function	Associated neurologic phenotype/disorder
Acetyl-CoA acyltransferase 1	<i>ACAA1</i>	Involved in neuronal growth and myelinogenesis (83)	Alzheimer's (84)
Apolipoprotein E	<i>APOE</i>	Facilitates the transfer of cholesterol and phospholipid between cells, key role in neuronal development, brain plasticity, and repair (85)	Alzheimer's, Schizophrenia (41)
Aquaporin 7	<i>AQP7</i>	Allows movement of water, glycerol, and urea across cell membranes*	
Armadillo repeat gene deleted in velocardiocardial syndrome	<i>ARVCF</i>	Modulates neural cell-cell adhesion and migration (46)	Schizophrenia (46)
Brain-derived neurotrophic factor	<i>BDNF</i>	Regulates cell survival, axonal outgrowth, dendritic growth, and synaptic plasticity (86)	Depression, Bipolar, Schizophrenia, Anxiety, Autism, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD),

			Substance abuse, Eating disorders, Alzheimer's (41)
Casein kinase 1, alpha 1	<i>CSNK1A1</i>	Suppressor of Wnt/ β -catenin signaling*	Schizophrenia (87)
Casein kinase 1, alpha 1-like	<i>CSNK1A1L</i>	Involved in negative regulation of canonical Wnt signaling pathway and peptidyl-serine phosphorylation*	
Catechol-O-methyltransferase	<i>COMT</i>	Degrades dopamine and other catecholamines (88)	Schizophrenia (41)
Discs large MAGUK scaffold protein 4	<i>DLG4</i>	Synapse structure and development (44)	Intellectual disability, Epilepsy, Autism spectrum disorder, Schizophrenia (44,89)
Disrupted in schizophrenia 1	<i>DISC1</i>	neural migration, neurite outgrowth, and dendritic arborization (90)	Schizophrenia, Bipolar, Autism, Depression (41)
Erb-B2 Receptor Tyrosine Kinase 4	<i>ERBB4</i>	Role in neurodevelopment such as glial and neuronal migration, myelination, excitatory neuronal	Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder (47)

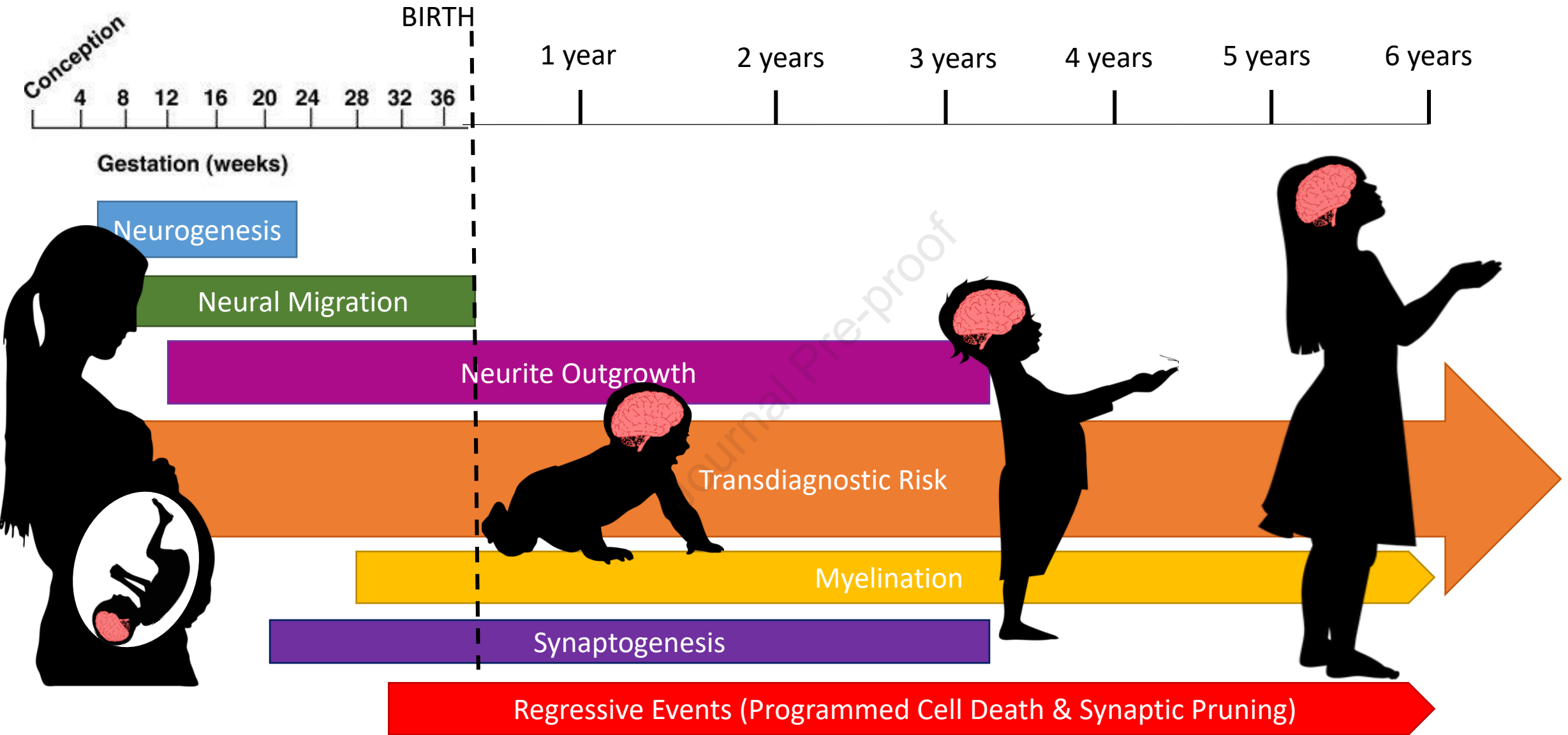
		receptor expression and the onset of puberty (47)	
Estrogen Receptor 1	<i>ESR1</i>	Mediates estrogen effects on synaptogenesis, growth factor production, and responses to oxidative stress (91)	Anxiety, Depression, Schizophrenia, Alzheimer's (41) interact with early dietary exposures to influence childhood IQ (46)
Fatty acid desaturase 2	<i>FADS2</i>	Essential for neurogenesis, neurotransmission, and protection from oxidative stress (46)	Autism spectrum disorder (92)
F-box and WD repeat domain containing 11	<i>FBXW11</i>	Involved in ubiquitination and proteasomal degradation (92)	Depression, PTSD (50)
FK506-binding protein 5	<i>FKBP5</i>	Transcriptional regulation of the HPA axis (50)	Schizophrenia, Bipolar disorder (94)
Fragile X Mental Retardation, Autosomal Homolog 1	<i>FXR1</i>	levels of FXR1 are important for Parvalbumin interneurons (99)	Learning and memory (95)
Insulin-like growth factor-binding protein 7	<i>IGFBP7</i>	Regulation of availability of insulin- like growth factors (IGFs)*	Schizophrenia (96)
Integrin Subunit Alpha 6	<i>ITGA6</i>	Involved in insulin-like growth factor 1 signaling (80)	

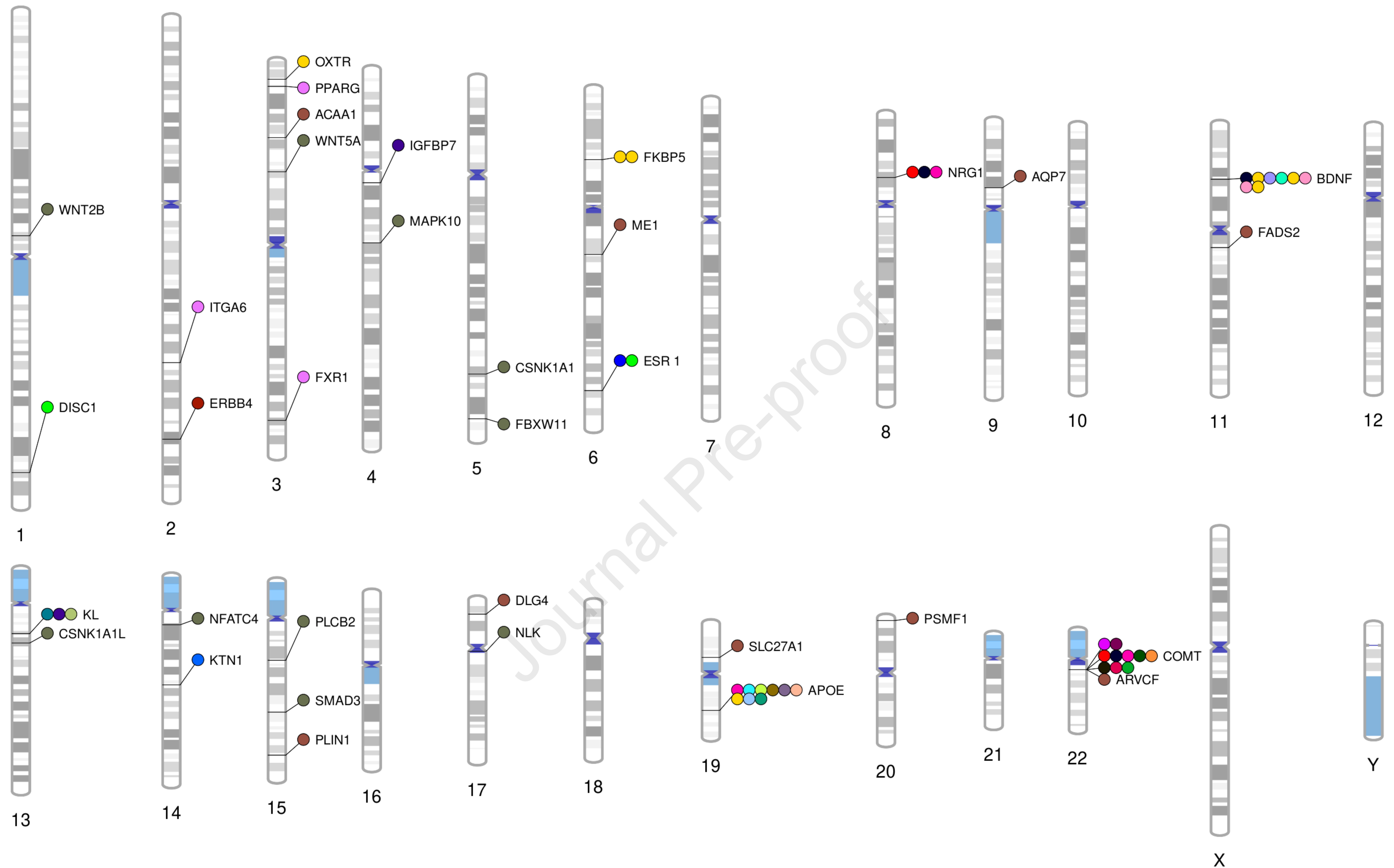
Kinectin 1	<i>KTN1</i>	Encodes the protein kinectin, a receptor that allows vesicle binding to kinesin and is involved in organelle transport (59)	ADHD (59)
Klotho	<i>KL</i>	Health and survival(43)	Cognition (43)
Malic enzyme 1	<i>ME1</i>	Sex-specific gene regulation in the offspring, key regulator of a T2DM-specific gene expression network (97,98)	
Mitogen-activated protein kinase 10	<i>MAPK10</i>	Neuronal proliferation, differentiation, migration, and programmed cell death*	Cognition(99)
Nemo-like kinase	<i>NLK</i>	Positive effector of the non-canonical Wnt signaling pathway and Negative regulator of the canonical Wnt/beta-catenin signaling pathway*	
Neuregulin 1	<i>NRG1</i>	Mediate cell-cell interactions in the brain and other organs, neuronal migration and specification, oligodendrocyte differentiation and myelination, regulation of acetylcholine, and expression of	Schizophrenia, Bipolar (41)

		glutamate and γ -aminobutyric acid (GABA) receptors (100)	
Nuclear factor of activated T-cells, cytoplasmic 4	<i>NFATC4</i>	Hippocampal plasticity, axonal growth, neuronal survival, and apoptosis (101)	Cognition
Oxytocin receptor	<i>OTR</i>	Receptor for oxytocin (51)	Depression, Autism, Eating disorder (51)
Perilipin 1	<i>PLIN1</i>	Regulates droplet formation in lipopolysaccharide-stimulated microglia (102)	
Peroxisome Proliferator Activated Receptor Gamma	<i>PPARG</i>	Regulator of adipocyte differentiation*	Schizophrenia (103)
Phospholipase C, beta 2	<i>PLCB2</i>	Catalyzes the hydrolysis of phosphatidylinositol 4,5-bisphosphate*	Schizophrenia (104)
Proteasome Inhibitor Subunit 1	<i>PSMF1</i>	Inhibits activation of the 26S proteasome, a multicatalytic proteinase complex that may play a role in developmental axonal pruning and synaptic plasticity (105)	
SMAD family member 3	<i>SMAD3</i>	Involved in regulating inflammatory responses(106)	Alzheimer's(106), Cognition(107)

Solute carrier family 27			
(fatty acid transporter), member 1	<i>SLC27A1</i>	Involved in fatty acid transport across the blood–brain barrier (108)	
Wingless-type MMTV integration site family, member 2B			
	<i>WNT2B</i>	Regulation of cell growth and differentiation*	Bipolar disorder(109)
Wingless-type MMTV integration site family, member 5A			
	<i>WNT5A</i>	Essential role in regulating developmental pathways during embryogenesis*	Schizophrenia(110), Memory(111)

*GeneCards(112)





- ICV
- Somatosensory Cortex
- CT in Dorsolateral PFC
- Lateral Temporal Region
- Frontal Lobe
- WM FA
- CT in Superior Parietal Cortex
- Superior Parietal Gyrus
- Temporal Lobe
- TBV
- CT in Precuneus
- CT in Entorhinal Cortex
- Occipital Lobe
- Total GMV
- CT in Posterior Cingulate
- WM Structural Connectivity
- Parietal Lobe
- Total WMV
- WM MWF
- Precuneus
- Supplementary Motor Area
- Amygdala
- Cingulate Region
- Occipitotemporal Region
- Hippocampus
- CT in Ventrolateral PFC
- CT in Precentral Gyrus
- Primary Motor Area
- Putamen
- WM Tracts
- Cortical SA

6809

Aim 1a: Harmonized Genomes

6400

Aim 1b: Harmonized Imaging Data

Structural MRI: 5700

DTI: 5500

fMRI: 5100

Aim 1c: Harmonized Behavior Data

3800

Aim 2a: Genomic Heritabilities & Correlations

Structural MRI: 5400

DTI: 5200

fMRI: 4800

Aim 2b: Association Analysis

Modality	Discovery	Validation
Structural	4100	1300
DTI	4000	1200
fMRI	3700	1100

Aim 2c: Integration with PGC data

MRI: 4100

DTI: 4000

fMRI: 3700

Aim 3: Identify correlations
between genetically influenced
DIPs and clinically salient behavior

2900