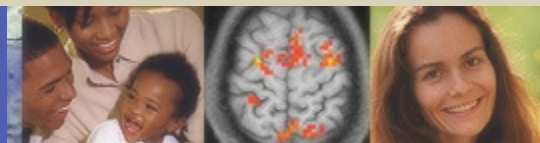




National Institute of Mental Health

Reducing the burden of mental illness and behavioral disorders through research on mind, brain, and behavior

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May 1, 2008

Study launched to test possible preventive treatment for schizophrenia in high risk youth

NIMH has recently awarded a grant to study whether an intensive computerized training program can help prevent those at high risk of developing [schizophrenia](#) from having a first [psychotic](#) episode and improve adaptive functioning. The program is based on principles of brain development and resilience and an understanding of the processes that go awry in schizophrenia.

In a 16-week study, Sophia Vinogradov, M.D., of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and colleagues will assess cognitive performance in young people ages 16-25 after 80 hours of computerized training exercises designed to increase in difficulty as the user's performance improves. Recruiting participants from UCSF and the University of California, Davis, the researchers will compare a group of healthy youth with 40 youth who are at "ultra high risk" for schizophrenia, meaning they show some early symptoms of the illness but have not yet been diagnosed. Another matched group of ultra high risk youth will serve as an "active control" group, which will complete a different type of computer game than the intensive training program.

Previous studies have shown that this type of intensive training can help improve some aspects of learning and memory in adults with chronic schizophrenia. The researchers anticipate that the same type of program may help offset the symptoms of a serious mental illness reduce risk and possibly prevent disease onset in those at risk.

Press Contact(s)

Karin Lee
NIMH Press Office
301-443-4536
nimhpress@nih.gov

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