

Childhood and adolescent depression : the role of environmental adversities, of the serotonin transporter gene and of their interaction, in a developmental perspective

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**Childhood and Adolescent Depression.
The Role of Environmental Adversities,
of the Serotonin Transporter Gene and of their Interaction,
in a Developmental Perspective**

Maria Nobile, 11th October 2012

- 1) A functional polymorphism in the promoter region of the serotonin transporter gene (5HTTLPR) plays an important role in the regulation of serotonin re-uptake from the intrasynaptic cleft both in adults and in children.
- 2) The *5-HTTLPR* is a genetic substrate for youth internalizing behaviour: the less efficient allele yields greater risk concomitantly with exposure to chronic environmentally adversities during adolescence.
- 3) The *5-HTTLPR* polymorphism plays also an important role in determining the continuity/discontinuity of depressive traits throughout a developmental period (i.e. adolescence) during which internalizing problems increase.
- 4) Primary prevention strategies, emphasizing social and educational intervention, may reduce the likelihood of persistence of behavioural problems from early- to late-adolescence and, perhaps, to early adult years.
- 5) In the context of the forthcoming publication of DSM V, the concept of depression as a spectrum holds potential for the inclusion of more children and teens as experiencing this condition.
- 6) Dedicated recommendations are needed to govern unique ethical, legal, and social issues surrounding pediatric biobanking.
- 7) Prosocial behaviour or altruism, are part of our genetic endowment and are modified by evolutionary pressures and cultural values, thus leading to human styles of moral behaviour (P. Churchland).
- 8) The regulatory agencies' actions in North America and Europe bring about unexpected effects on the paediatric antidepressant prescription and on childhood suicide rate.
- 9) "Today the fact is that *understanding life means changing life*" (H. Nowotny & G. Testa)
- 10) "We've got no money, so we've got to think."(E. Rutherford 1871-1937).