

## Research Project

### Gene-environment interactions in the etiology, symptomatology and treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

#### Third-party funded project

**Project title** Gene-environment interactions in the etiology, symptomatology and treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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**Organisation / Research unit**

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Departement Psychologie / Cognitive Neuroscience (de Quervain)

**Department**

**Project start** 01.07.2013

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**Status** Completed

Genetic risk factors contribute to the susceptibility of developing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after exposure to traumatic events. A comprehensive characterization of the genetics of PTSD could contribute to a better understanding of the underlying molecular mechanisms and provide important insights for the development of drugs to prevent and treat PTSD. Furthermore, PTSD is uniquely suited for the study of gene  $\times$  environment interactions since trauma exposure constitutes a necessary factor for the disorder to manifest. Likewise, in contrast to other disorders, the relevant environmental risk factor can be quantified and included in the analyses, which makes PTSD uniquely suited for etiological research on individual vulnerability factors. The recent development of cost-effective genotyping platforms allows high-resolution genome-wide association studies for the unbiased identification of novel genes related to PTSD. This project aims at systematically investigating the genetics of PTSD, by using genome-wide scans in a large sample of individuals from conflict regions in Africa. More specifically, we plan to investigate gene  $\times$  environment interactions in the etiology and symptomatology of PTSD. The identified genetic risk factors will be validated in an independent sample and their influence on the response to trauma-focused therapeutic treatment will be analyzed. The results of this project will contribute to a deeper understanding of genetic risk factors involved in PTSD etiology and their role in trauma-focused therapy.

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