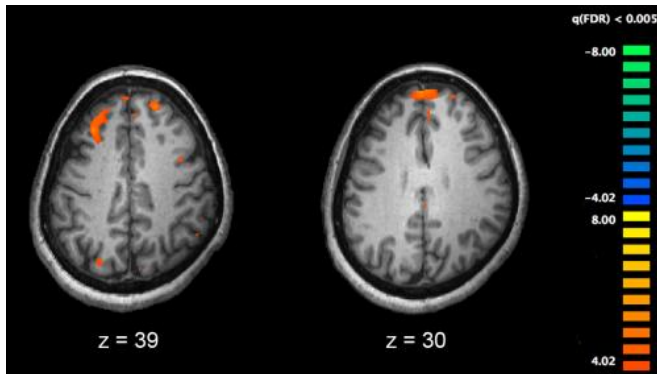


# Long-acting antipsychotic therapy plus cognitive training show promise for schizophrenia

19 November 2020



Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and other brain imaging technologies allow for the study of differences in brain activity in people diagnosed with schizophrenia. The image shows two levels of the brain, with areas that were more active in healthy controls than in schizophrenia patients shown in orange, during an fMRI study of working memory. Credit: Kim J, Matthews NL, Park S./PLoS One.

UCLA scientists and colleagues found the use of long-acting antipsychotic medication combined with the use of cognitive training in group settings led to improved cognition and increased productivity.

Researchers say [patients](#) using a combination of long-acting [antipsychotic medication](#) and a multipronged cognitive remediation that taught memory and problem-solving skills had significant improvements in work and school function.

Schizophrenia is a [serious mental illness](#) that affects how a person thinks, feels and behaves. People with schizophrenia may appear to have lost touch with reality, which can cause distress for family and friends and lead to permanent disability. Treatments delivered in a sustained manner can

help people with schizophrenia engage in school or work, achieve independence and enjoy personal relationships.

During a 12-month randomized controlled trial, 60 patients from the UCLA Aftercare Program who recently experienced a first episode of schizophrenia were randomized to oral or long-acting injectable antipsychotic medication and to either cognitive remediation or healthy behavior training. Cognitive remediation involved training in attention, memory, and problem-solving skills to help navigate complex, life-like situations. The healthy behavior training focused on nutrition, [stress management](#), and exercise, with equal treatment time. All patients were provided supported employment and education to encourage return to work or school.

Systematic cognitive training, when combined with consistent antipsychotic medication adherence, achieved in this case through the use of a long-acting medication, can significantly improve cognitive deficits in the initial period of schizophrenia. These therapies show a separate significant impact on improving work and school functioning.

The research is published in the journal *Psychological Medicine*.

**More information:** Keith H. Nuechterlein et al, A randomized controlled trial of cognitive remediation and long-acting injectable risperidone after a first episode of schizophrenia: improving cognition and work/school functioning, *Psychological Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1017/S0033291720003335](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291720003335)

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