

Grant to aid schizophrenia research

October 19, 2009
by [Anna Sanders](#)

The NYU Langone Medical Center will use a recent \$10 million grant to launch a new center for studying the onset of schizophrenia.

The center will be named after the late U.S. congressman, Silvio O. Conte, who advocated for the advancement of mental health research. The grant was given to NYU by the National Institute of Mental Health.

The new Center for the Neuroscience of Mental Disorders will take innovative approaches to treat and research schizophrenia, said Daniel Javitt, an NYU Langone psychiatry professor who will lead the center.

"The NIH grant has helped us establish this center to develop and enhance research in mental disorders, especially schizophrenia in adolescent populations," said Vivian Lee, vice dean for science and chief scientific officer at NYU Langone.

NYU has been conducting research on schizophrenia for many years, and the grant gives researchers the opportunity to work closer to campus by focusing on patients at Bellevue Hospital, according to Lee.

Lee said the partnership among Bellevue, NYU Langone and NYU's affiliate, the Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research, brings together a wide range of investigators and patient populations to establish an ideal environment to study mental disorders.

According to Jonathan DuBois, a 2007 NYU alumnus who works at NYU Langone's Comprehensive Epilepsy Center, an understanding of how schizophrenia affects the brain would have an impact on the entire field of neuroscience.

While most schizophrenia research focuses on dopamine receptors, the new center will challenge the belief that too much dopamine in the brain is the main cause of the disease, Javitt said. Instead, the researchers will investigate how schizophrenia is related to NMDA receptors, the predominant molecular device for controlling memory function, and how NMDA dysfunction might cause sensory deficits associated with schizophrenia.

"These deficits are known to exist in schizophrenic patients, but their underlying causes are less well understood," Javitt said. "We believe this approach to studying and understanding schizophrenia may open up new avenues of potential therapies for these patients."