

Mapping Cortical and Subcortical Asymmetry in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Findings From the ENIGMA Consortium

Xiang-Zhen Kong, Premika S.W. Boedhoe, Yoshinari Abe, Pino Alonso, Stephanie H. Ameis, Paul D. Arnold, Francesca Assogna, Justin T. Baker, Marcelo C. Batistuzzo, Francesco Benedetti, Jan C. Beucke, Irene Bollettini, Anushree Bose, Silvia Brem, Brian P. Brennan, Jan Buitelaar, Rosa Calvo, Yuqi Cheng, Kang Ik K. Cho, Sara Dallaspezia, Damiaan Denys, Benjamin A. Ely, Jamie Feusner, Kate D. Fitzgerald, Jean-Paul Fouché, Egill A. Fridgeirsson, David C. Glahn, Patricia Gruner, Deniz A. Gürsel, Tobias U. Hauser, Yoshiyuki Hirano, Marcelo Q. Hoexter, Hao Hu, Chaim Huyser, Anthony James, Fern Jaspers-Fayer, Norbert Kathmann, Christian Kaufmann, Kathrin Koch, Masaru Kuno, Gerd Kvale, Jun Soo Kwon, Luisa Lazaro, Yanni Liu, Christine Lochner, Paulo Marques, Rachel Marsh, Ignacio Martínez-Zalacain, David Mataix-Cols, Sarah E. Medland, José M. Menchón, Luciano Minuzzi, Pedro S. Moreira, Astrid Morer, Pedro Morgado, Akiko Nakagawa, Takashi Nakamae, Tomohiro Nakao, Janardhanan C. Narayanaswamy, Erika L. Nurmi, Joseph O'Neill, Jose C. Pariente, Chris Perriello, John Piacentini, Fabrizio Piras, Federica Piras, Christopher Pittenger, Y.C. Janardhan Reddy, Oana Georgiana Rus-Oswald, Yuki Sakai, Joao R. Sato, Lianne Schmaal, H. Blair Simpson, Noam Soreni, Carles Soriano-Mas, Gianfranco Spalletta, Emily R. Stern, Michael C. Stevens, S. Evelyn Stewart, Philip R. Szeszko, David F. Tolin, Aki Tsuchiyagaito, Daan van Rooij, Guido A. van Wingen, Ganesan Venkatasubramanian, Zhen Wang, Je-Yeon Yun, ENIGMA OCD Working Group, Paul M. Thompson, Dan J. Stein, Odile A. van den Heuvel, and Clyde Francks

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Lateralized dysfunction has been suggested in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). However, it is currently unclear whether OCD is characterized by abnormal patterns of brain structural asymmetry. Here we carried out what is by far the largest study of brain structural asymmetry in OCD.

METHODS: We studied a collection of 16 pediatric datasets (501 patients with OCD and 439 healthy control subjects), as well as 30 adult datasets (1777 patients and 1654 control subjects) from the OCD Working Group within the ENIGMA (Enhancing Neuro Imaging Genetics through Meta Analysis) Consortium. Asymmetries of the volumes of subcortical structures, and of measures of regional cortical thickness and surface areas, were assessed based on T1-weighted magnetic resonance imaging scans, using harmonized image analysis and quality control protocols. We investigated possible alterations of brain asymmetry in patients with OCD. We also explored potential associations of asymmetry with specific aspects of the disorder and medication status.

RESULTS: In the pediatric datasets, the largest case-control differences were observed for volume asymmetry of the thalamus (more leftward; Cohen's $d = 0.19$) and the pallidum (less leftward; $d = -0.21$). Additional analyses suggested putative links between these asymmetry patterns and medication status, OCD severity, or anxiety and depression comorbidities. No significant case-control differences were found in the adult datasets.

CONCLUSIONS: The results suggest subtle changes of the average asymmetry of subcortical structures in pediatric OCD, which are not detectable in adults with the disorder. These findings may reflect altered neurodevelopmental processes in OCD.

Keywords: Brain asymmetry, Laterality, Mega-analysis, Obsessive-compulsive disorder, Pallidum, Thalamus

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2019.04.022>

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a psychiatric disorder with a lifetime prevalence of approximately 2% (1–4). OCD involves persistent, intrusive, and unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors that might be accompanied by mental acts (compulsions) (4). As a heterogeneous neuropsychiatric condition with a considerable heritability of roughly 40% (5), OCD has significant genetic and nongenetic determinants (4), but the pathophysiology of this complex disorder remains unclear.

Left–right asymmetry is an important aspect of human brain organization for multiple functions (6). For example, visuospatial processing and emotions that elicit withdrawal behaviors are usually right lateralized in healthy people (7–10), whereas language-related processes, hand motor dominance, and emotions that elicit approach behaviors tend to be left lateralized in the brain (11,12). Alterations of asymmetry have been reported in various psychiatric and neurocognitive conditions, including schizophrenia (13,14), autism (15), and dyslexia (16). Altered functional laterality has also been investigated in OCD (17,18), partly because of observations of psychometric deficits within the visuospatial domain (19–21), as well as altered emotional processing (22–25). For example, in a behavioral study, investigators found reduced functional asymmetry for spatial attention in patients with OCD, and reported that reversal of normal asymmetry was associated with more serious obsessions (20). Several studies found greater impairment in visuospatial memory compared with that in verbal memory in OCD, which is suggestive of right-sided dysfunction (17,18,26). Increased left–right asymmetry of electroencephalographic activity at rest, or reduced activity in the right hemisphere linked to approach and/or avoidance motivation, has also been reported in persons with OCD compared with activity in healthy control subjects (19,22). However, left-sided dysfunction has also been suggested in OCD, on the basis of neuropsychological data (23) and neuroimaging studies (27–29). Reduced right-ear advantage, which can indicate left-hemisphere dysfunction, was reported in OCD for certain tasks (23). In addition, hyperresponsiveness was observed in the left hemisphere based on event-related potentials (27,30). More recently, left-lateralized differences in functional connectivity of the amygdala were found in OCD versus control subjects, using task functional magnetic resonance imaging (31). Studies with animal models of OCD (32), and transcranial magnetic stimulation in patients with treatment-resistant OCD (33) have suggested that left-lateralized stimulation is more effective than right-lateralized stimulation. Therefore, overall, the literature suggests altered hemispheric functional balance in OCD but does not point consistently to one of the hemispheres as the primary site of disruption.

Importantly, any structural basis linked to altered functional laterality in OCD is still unclear. Two previous studies explored brain structural asymmetry in OCD as a specific outcome of interest, but both had small sample sizes. In one of these studies, with 16 patients with OCD, leftward asymmetry (i.e., left > right) of cortical thickness in the anterior cingulate region was found in patients with OCD and their siblings but not in matched control subjects, and investigators claimed that this finding presented a potential endophenotype linked to increased hereditary risk for OCD (34). In the other study, with

32 patients, significant differences of frontal white matter volume asymmetry were found in both medicated ($n = 19$) and nonmedicated ($n = 13$) patients with OCD, compared with frontal white matter in healthy control subjects (35). Unfortunately, small sample sizes tend to limit the reliability of findings in human neuroscience (36), and the extent of any association between OCD and structural brain asymmetry remains uncertain.

The OCD Working Group within the Enhancing Neuro Imaging Genetics through Meta Analysis (ENIGMA) Consortium (37) recently achieved more highly powered analyses of brain changes in OCD, based on a sample size of >1500 individuals with OCD and a similar number of control subjects (38). They reported several regional case-control differences in cerebral cortical measures that involved only one hemisphere (38). However, these analyses did not examine whether effect sizes were significantly different on the left and right sides, and asymmetry was not quantitatively characterized. Unilateral patterns in this and other studies may arise from small but uniform bilateral effect sizes; the fact that statistical significance was achieved on one side but not on the other does not necessarily indicate a significant change in asymmetry. Furthermore, a post hoc statistical comparison of the left- and right-sided effect sizes as reported by the previous ENIGMA study (38) would not yield the same level of statistical power as can be provided by using the individual-level, paired left and right data to analyze asymmetry alterations in OCD. In addition, a previous ENIGMA study of subcortical volumes in OCD reported only combined left and right volumes (39).

Here, we used the latest data for both subcortical and cortical structures from the ENIGMA OCD Working Group, and we targeted hemispheric structural asymmetry across subcortical and cortical measures, as assessed by subject-specific asymmetry indices, $AI = (Left - Right)/((Left + Right)/2)$ (40). The AI is a widely used approach in studies of brain asymmetry [e.g., Kurth *et al.* (41) and Leroy *et al.* (42)]. Our primary interest was to compare structural asymmetries between patients and healthy control subjects, but we also performed post hoc analyses to investigate possible associations of brain asymmetries with medication status, age at disease onset, disease duration, OCD severity, and presence of anxiety and depression comorbidities. As the recent studies from the ENIGMA OCD Working Group had indicated distinct alterations in pediatric and adult patients (38,39), and because asymmetries of both cortical and subcortical structures are also known to change subtly with age in the healthy population (40,43), we performed all analyses for the pediatric (<18 years of age) and adult (≥ 18 years of age) data separately [see also van den Heuvel *et al.* (44)].

METHODS AND MATERIALS

See [Supplemental Methods and Materials](#) in [Supplement 1](#) for detailed methods.

Datasets

The datasets used in this study were provided by members of the OCD Working Group within the ENIGMA Consortium (37). There were 46 independent datasets from 16 countries: 16 pediatric datasets comprising 501 patients with OCD and 439

Table 1. Summary Information on the Case-Control Datasets Included in This Study

Group	Site ^a	Field Strength	Age, Years, Mean (SD)		Male, %		Control Subjects, <i>n</i>	Persons With OCD, <i>n</i>	Total Subjects, <i>n</i>
			Control Subjects	Persons With OCD	Control Subjects	Persons With OCD			
Pediatric									
	James	1.5T	16.63 (1.23)	16.3 (1.42)	58	54	12	13	25
	Lazaro	1.5T	14.63 (2.3)	14.61 (2.04)	47	58	32	31	63
	Buitelaar	1.5T	10.93 (1.04)	10.57 (1.41)	72	64	61	22	83
	Fitzgerald	3T	12.96 (2.73)	14.17 (2.59)	51	48	59	62	121
	Gruner	3T	14.19 (2.21)	14.33 (2.09)	52	57	23	23	46
	Arnold	3T	12.3 (2.19)	12.86 (2.35)	54	61	13	36	49
	Hoexter	3T	12 (2.42)	12.61 (2.45)	57	61	28	28	56
	Huyser	3T	13.32 (2.55)	13.59 (2.47)	36	37	25	27	52
	Stewart	3T	14.02 (3.48)	15.04 (2.68)	40	39	30	28	58
	Lazaro	3T	14.57 (2.1)	14.57 (2.04)	55	60	44	58	102
	Nurmi	3T	13.3 (2.49)	12.53 (2.84)	50	54	36	59	95
	Walitza	3T	14.64 (1.34)	15.68 (1.45)	50	81	20	16	36
	Reddy	3T	13.07 (2.06)	14.56 (1.98)	50	56	14	18	32
	Marsh	3T	9.14 (2.48)	12.12 (3.4)	57	52	14	25	39
	Hirano	3T	15.33 (1.03)	14 (2.18)	67	65	6	20	26
	Soreni	3T	11.09 (3.02)	13.09 (2.47)	50	37	22	35	57
Pediatric Samples Combined			13.06 (2.77)	13.67 (2.65)	53	54	439	501	940
Adult									
	Menchón	1.5T	33.06 (10.19)	34.83 (9.17)	45	50	66	117	183
	Cheng	1.5T	31.43 (7.96)	30.63 (10.21)	33	38	40	24	64
	KwonNMC	1.5T	24.05 (3.63)	24.76 (5.36)	56	76	104	45	149
	KwonSNU	1.5T	24.89 (5.35)	28.1 (6.71)	64	63	45	41	86
	Nakamae	1.5T	30.44 (7.9)	31.61 (9.15)	46	48	48	82	130
	Morgado	1.5T	27.58 (6.23)	27.69 (7.4)	38	47	53	59	112
	Mataix-Cols	1.5T	36.12 (11.26)	38.68 (10.9)	36	43	33	44	77
	Reddy	1.5T	27.22 (6.45)	27.45 (6.31)	74	59	46	44	90
	Hoexter	1.5T	27.62 (7.75)	31.46 (10.06)	35	44	37	50	87
	van den Heuvel	1.5T	31.57 (7.67)	33.54 (9.19)	39	30	49	54	103
	Beucke	1.5T	31.92 (9.5)	32.41 (9.74)	49	50	104	92	196
	Cheng	3T	26.19 (4.18)	32.89 (10.57)	28	55	95	56	151
	Nakamae	3T	29.57 (7.27)	32.82 (9.74)	45	35	42	34	76
	Brennan	3T	32.38 (12.14)	28.84 (9.99)	45	56	29	98	127
	van den Heuvel	3T	39.61 (11.37)	38.32 (10.07)	47	48	38	42	80
	Denys	3T	39.64 (10.32)	35.26 (9.17)	44	26	25	31	56
	Kwon	3T	26.26 (6.9)	26.7 (7.28)	61	62	89	90	179
	Benedetti	3T	33.98 (12.35)	35.02 (10.39)	73	71	62	66	128
	Hirano	3T	30.95 (8.36)	33.11 (7.82)	45	36	44	47	91
	Koch	3T	30.27 (9.04)	30.91 (9.55)	39	37	74	76	150
	Stein	3T	30.59 (10.76)	30.48 (10.63)	38	48	29	23	52
	Tolin	3T	48 (11.87)	32.11 (12.04)	22	67	32	27	59
	Simpson	3T	28.27 (8.04)	29.62 (7.98)	52	52	33	33	66
	Nakao	3T	39.34 (12.99)	36.6 (10.02)	39	42	41	81	122
	Spalletta	3T	36.52 (10.55)	36.67 (11.56)	59	67	128	84	212
	Stern	3T	28.17 (7.15)	27.87 (6.9)	44	33	18	15	33
	Wang	3T	26.24 (7.55)	29.47 (9.33)	54	55	37	53	90
	Nurmi	3T	30.76 (11.77)	33.31 (11.04)	56	51	25	49	74
	Walitza	3T	32.89 (9.21)	30.72 (7.76)	28	47	18	17	35

Table 1. Continued

Group	Site ^a	Field Strength	Age, Years, Mean (SD)		Male, %		Control Subjects, <i>n</i>	Persons With OCD, <i>n</i>	Total Subjects, <i>n</i>
			Control Subjects	Persons With OCD	Control Subjects	Persons With OCD			
Reddy		3T	26.59 (4.88)	29.5 (6.74)	64	53	170	203	373
Adult Samples Combined			30.55 (9.73)	31.74 (9.66)	50	51	1654	1777	3431

NMC, National Medical Center; SNU, Seoul National University.

^aSite indicates the representative author of each dataset.

healthy control subjects, and 30 adult datasets comprising 1777 patients with OCD and 1654 healthy control subjects (Table 1, Supplemental Figures S1 and S2 in Supplement 1, and Supplemental Table S1 in Supplement 2). All local institutional review boards permitted the use of measures extracted from their anonymized data. In addition, we leveraged publicly available summary statistics that describe the average form of brain regional asymmetries, based on our previous larger studies of healthy individuals (40,43).

Image Acquisition and Processing

Structural T1-weighted magnetic resonance imaging scans were acquired and processed locally at each collection site. Images were acquired at different field strengths (1.5T and 3T). All images were analyzed using one automated and validated pipeline, i.e., “recon-all” as implemented in FreeSurfer. For each participant, surface area and mean thickness were extracted for each of the 68 cortical regions (34 per hemisphere) in the Desikan-Killiany parcellation scheme (45), as well as total hemispheric surface area, and the average mean thickness over each hemisphere. In addition, volumes of eight subcortical regions of interest, including seven subcortical structures (nucleus accumbens, amygdala, caudate, hippocampus, pallidum, putamen, and thalamus), and the lateral ventricle volume were calculated.

Asymmetry Indices

The aim of this study was to investigate differences in subcortical and cortical asymmetry related to OCD. To this end, for each participant and for each subcortical or cortical measure, an AI was defined as $(L - R)/(L + R)/2$, where *L* and *R* represent the corresponding left and right volume measures (from subcortical regions) or thickness and surface area measures (from cortical regions). This AI formula has been widely used in previous brain asymmetry studies (41,42,46), including our own (8,40,43).

Case-Control Analyses

Separately for the pediatric and adult data, and for each AI, we pooled data from all available individuals from each dataset, and we used a mega-analytical framework to investigate the case-control effects. Specifically, for each AI, we used a linear mixed-effect model (using *lme4* R package), with AI as the outcome variable and a binary indicator of diagnosis (0 = control subject, 1 = patient with OCD) as the predictor of interest. In each model, a binary variable for sex, and a continuous measure for age (in years at the time of scan) were included as confounding factors, and the categorical variable “dataset” as a random-effect term.

Separately for thickness and surface area, we additionally calculated an overall “typicality score” per participant, which indexed how much a given participant deviated from the population mean asymmetry profile when considered simultaneously across all 34 cortical regions. A lower typicality score indicates more deviation from the mean asymmetry profile in the population.

OCD Case-Only Analyses of Clinical Characteristics

For AIs that were potentially associated with OCD in the main analysis (see Results), we further investigated, within cases only, whether the AIs were associated with specific aspects of the disorder and medication status.

RESULTS

An overview of the datasets is provided in Table 1, Supplemental Figures S1 and S2 in Supplement 1, and Supplemental Table S1 in Supplement 2.

Pediatric Data

The results for both subcortical and cortical AIs in the pediatric data, including the effect size estimates for diagnosis on each AI, are presented in Figure 1 and Supplemental Tables S2 to S4 in Supplement 2.

The largest effects of diagnosis in pediatric cases were more leftward asymmetry of the thalamus ($t = 2.84$, $p = .0047$, $d = 0.19$) (Figures 1 and 2), and less leftward asymmetry of the pallidum volume ($t = -3.17$, $p = .0016$, $d = -0.21$) (Figures 1 and 2). These two findings were significant when controlling the false discovery rate at 0.05 (see Methods and Materials). Post hoc analyses showed that these case-control differences were mainly due to a left thalamus that was relatively larger in patients with OCD than in control subjects (left: $t = 4.08$, $p = 4.89 \times 10^{-5}$, $d = 0.27$; right: $t = 2.12$, $p = .034$, $d = 0.14$), and a left pallidum that was relatively smaller in patients with OCD than in control subjects (left: $t = -1.98$, $p = .048$, $d = -0.13$; right: $t < 1.0$, $p = .35$, $d = 0.062$) (see also Figure 2B for distribution and group differences of each unilateral volume measure). In addition, we confirmed that the effects remained when possible outliers were excluded in each AI per dataset (see Methods and Materials) (pediatric thalamus volume asymmetry: $t = 2.90$, $p = .0038$, $d = 0.19$; pediatric pallidum volume asymmetry: $t = -3.16$, $p = .0016$, $d = -0.21$).

In terms of cortical asymmetries in the pediatric data, no significant case-control differences in the global hemispheric AI for either cortical thickness or surface area were found (p values $> .40$). Regionally, only one AI showed a nominally

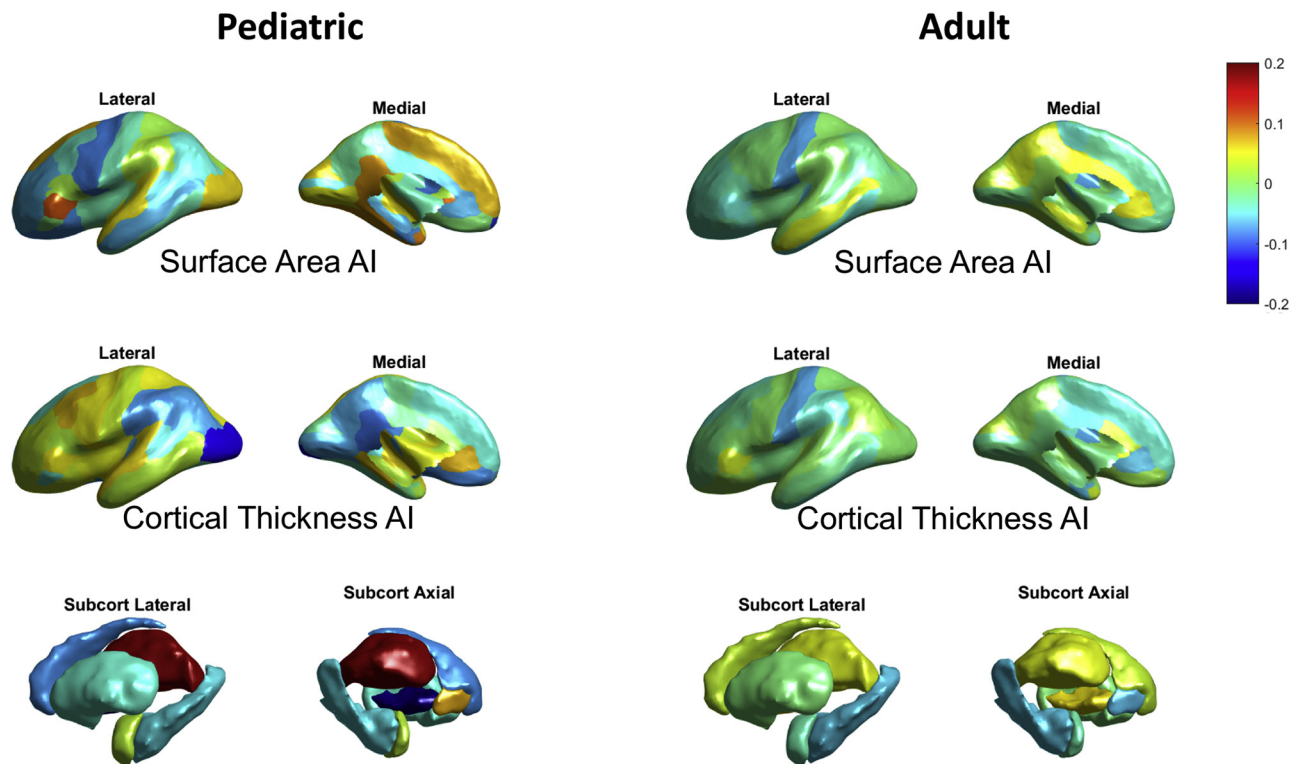


Figure 1. Effect size (Cohen's d) distributions for diagnosis on regional asymmetry indices (AIs) in the pediatric (left panel) and adult (right panel) data. Subcort, subcortical.

significant effect (i.e., prior to multiple testing correction) of diagnosis, which was for thickness asymmetry of the lateral occipital cortex (greater rightward asymmetry in patients with OCD; $t = -2.08$, $p = .038$, $d = -0.14$) (Figure 2). This finding did not survive multiple testing correction. No other AIs in case-control comparisons within the pediatric data showed significant effects (uncorrected p values $> .05$).

Within pediatric patients only, there were no differences of the thalamus or pallidum AIs between medicated and unmedicated participants (uncorrected p values $> .20$), nor with respect to current anxiety or depression comorbidity (p values $> .20$), or age at disease onset or disease duration (p values $> .05$). In terms of OCD symptoms, the pallidum AI showed significant association with two of the five major Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale symptom components: hoarding ($t = -2.37$, $p = .0065$) and cleaning/contamination ($t = -2.29$, $p = .014$), such that cases with these symptoms had reduced leftward asymmetry of the pallidum compared with cases without these symptoms. No significant associations of symptom severity were observed with the thalamus AI among the pediatric cases (p values $> .10$).

When the main analysis was repeated with the inclusion of age-squared in the model, in case of substantial nonlinear effects of age on AIs, all of the Cohen's d values for the effects of diagnosis remained within 0.005 of their values in analysis without the inclusion of age-squared, and the same two AIs (thalamus volume AI, pallidum volume AI) remained significant after false discovery rate correction. None of the AIs showed significant scanner effects in the pediatric data (p values $> .05$), and the significant effects of diagnosis remained when

scanner field strength was added to the main analysis models as a predictor variable (pediatric thalamus volume asymmetry: $t = 2.81$, $p = .0050$, $d = 0.19$; pediatric pallidum volume asymmetry: $t = -3.02$, $p = .0025$, $d = -0.20$).

We calculated per-participant typicality scores (see Methods and Materials) and compared the typicality scores between patients and control subjects. However, no significant differences were found in the pediatric data for either thickness or surface area asymmetries (p values $> .15$). This analysis might have been sensitive to multiregional disruptions of laterality that are not consistent in direction, as could conceivably arise from generally increased developmental instability.

Adult Data

The results for both subcortical and cortical AIs in the adult data, including the effect size estimates for diagnosis on each AI, are presented in Figure 1 and Supplemental Tables S5 to S7 in Supplement 2. All effects were subtle (Cohen's d between -0.086 and 0.066) and not as strong as those found in the pediatric data.

The largest effect in adults was a case-control difference in the AI of global hemispheric surface area ($t = -2.48$, $p = .013$, $d = -0.086$), indicating that adult OCD was associated with slightly more rightward overall asymmetry in surface area, compared with control subjects. However, this did not survive multiple testing correction when accounting for all regional surface area AI comparisons. Post hoc analyses showed that this difference was mainly due to relatively smaller surface area

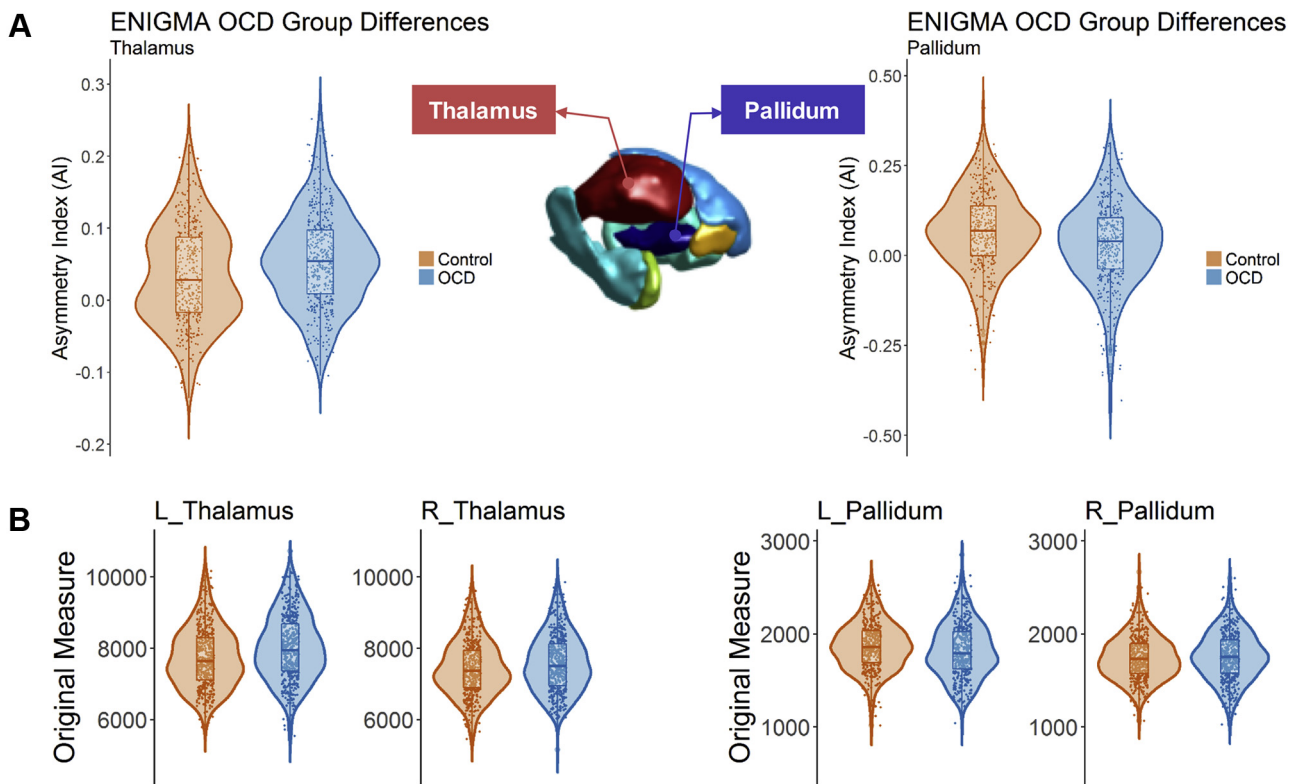


Figure 2. Subcortical structures showing altered volumetric asymmetry in pediatric patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): the thalamus and the pallidum. The violin plots show the distributions and group differences of **(A)** the volume asymmetry and **(B)** the lateral volume measures (in mm^3) in each hemisphere for the thalamus and the pallidum. Note that the main analyses were based on linear mixed-effect modeling with “dataset” as a random-effect term, whereas data are plotted here without correction for the “dataset” variable, for display purposes only. AI, asymmetry index; ENIGMA, Enhancing Neuro Imaging Genetics through Meta Analysis; L, left; R, right.

in the left hemisphere (left: $t = -2.80$, $p = .0051$, $d = -0.098$; right: $t = -2.18$, $p = .029$, $d = -0.076$) in adult patients with OCD than in control subjects. The effect on this AI remained after excluding potential outliers (see Methods and Materials) ($t = -3.03$, $p = .0025$, $d = -0.10$). No significant case-control difference in the total average asymmetry of cortical thickness was found ($p = .35$). No significant difference was found in regional asymmetries after multiple testing correction (Supplemental Methods and Materials in Supplement 1).

Although the observed effect of diagnosis on the AI of global hemispheric surface area did not survive multiple testing correction, we were interested to explore associations of this AI with case-only variables, as it is a global rather than regional measure. Within the adult patients with OCD, there was a trend toward unmedicated cases showing a mean AI difference compared with medicated cases ($t = -1.77$, $p = .077$, $d = -0.086$; i.e., more rightward asymmetry in medicated cases). Adult cases with current depression showed a mean AI difference compared with those without ($t = -2.15$, $p = .032$, $d = -0.17$; i.e., more rightward asymmetry in cases with current depression), whereas no effect of current anxiety comorbidity was observed ($p = .48$). There was no correlation of this AI with the age at disease onset ($t < 1.0$, $p = .53$) or the disease duration ($t = -1.03$, $p = .30$). In terms of OCD severity measures, no significant association was found with either the severity in total score or the subcomponent variables (p values $> .10$).

Including age-squared or scanner field strength did not change the main results (Supplemental Methods and Materials in Supplement 1). In the adult data, typicality scores (see Methods and Materials) showed no case-control difference for either thickness or surface area asymmetry (p values $> .15$).

The effect sizes of the AI case-control differences in the pediatric and adult data were found to be uncorrelated across the 34 cortical regions, for either thickness AIs or surface area AIs (p values $> .40$).

The full set of results from this study is available both in the Supplemental Tables in Supplement 2 and online (<https://conx.github.io/AsymOCD/>).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we aimed to map differences in brain asymmetry between patients with OCD and healthy control subjects by leveraging a collection of 16 pediatric datasets and 30 adult datasets collected via the ENIGMA Consortium. Using by far the largest sample size to address this issue to date, the results revealed a small number of asymmetry differences in patients with OCD. The largest effects were found in pediatric patients for the volume asymmetry of the thalamus and the pallidum. These effects both had Cohen's d values of around 0.2, which indicates their subtlety and suggests that altered structural brain asymmetry alone is unlikely to be a clinically

useful predictor of OCD. Nonetheless, these effect sizes were comparable with those reported by previous large-scale studies of disorder-related changes in brain structure, in which asymmetry was not studied, including studies of major depression (47,48), schizophrenia (49), posttraumatic stress disorder (50), and autism (51) as well as OCD (38,39). Given that the effect sizes in this study were estimated based on large sample sizes, relatively accurate estimations of the true effects were possible, whether they were statistically significant or not. As such, the effects are informative to share with the field.

Our finding of subtle changes in thalamus asymmetry in pediatric patients is broadly in accordance with previous disease models for OCD as regards the cortico-striatalthalamocortical circuitry, which is involved in a wide range of cognitive, motivational, and emotional processes (44). Boedhoe *et al.* (39) observed a mean increase in bilateral thalamus volume (left plus right) in pediatric patients with OCD versus that in control subjects, while in this study, with a larger collection of 16 datasets (including 10 datasets used by Boedhoe *et al.*), we found that this OCD-related volume alteration was largely left lateralized and resulted in altered thalamus asymmetry. It is not clear what pathophysiological mechanisms might link altered thalamus asymmetry to OCD. Within individuals with OCD, we found no associations of thalamus asymmetry with medication status, age at a disease onset, disease duration, current anxiety and depression comorbidity, or disease symptoms, which might have given some insights into the observed differences. The thalamus is involved in diverse interactions among cortical, subcortical, and brainstem nuclei, and many of its functions are asymmetrical in normal participants (52). In addition, the thalamus is subdivided into cytoarchitectonically distinct nuclei with different functions (53). Future studies using higher resolution mapping of internal thalamus subsegment structure and function may therefore be informative in pediatric OCD.

For the pallidum, no total volume change (left plus right) was reported by Boedhoe *et al.* (39) in pediatric patients with OCD, while here, with a larger collection of 16 pediatric datasets (including 10 datasets used by Boedhoe *et al.*), we found an asymmetry difference of the pallidum that was largely driven by a significantly reduced left-sided volume in pediatric patients with OCD. Boedhoe *et al.* also reported that adult patients with OCD showed a larger pallidum (again, left plus right) than that of control subjects, driven by patients with a childhood onset of disease (39). We saw no significant effect on pallidum asymmetry in adult patients, in either the subgroup of early onset of disease or that of late onset of disease (Supplemental Methods and Materials in Supplement 1). This overall pattern of results suggests that disease chronicity, cumulative treatment effects, or late-adolescence volumetric changes in patients are linked to a bilateral increase in pallidum volume but that reduced left-sided volume in pediatric patients reflects a different, earlier developmental process. Moreover, pallidum asymmetry in the pediatric patients showed associations with symptom components hoarding and cleaning/contamination. Although recently hoarding disorder was suggested as a separate diagnostic entity (54), in the present data there was only one case with hoarding behavior in the absence of other

symptoms. Thus, we do not consider this tentative effect on asymmetry to relate to hoarding disorder specifically.

The pallidum, linking with the striatum and the thalamus within the corticostriatalthalamocortical circuitry (44), has roles in reward and motivation, as well as broader cognitive, affective, and sensorimotor processes (44,55). Further studies on specific functions of the (left) pallidum in compulsive symptoms, cleaning/contamination behaviors specifically, are needed. While it is not clear why lateralized changes in particular should be involved, in general terms our findings in pediatric cases help to characterize the brain structural changes in this disorder, and they suggest altered subcortical neurodevelopment affecting the corticostriatalthalamocortical circuitry. Further research will be needed to clarify any potential functional relevance of asymmetrical alterations in particular.

In terms of cortical measures in the pediatric data, we found no significant case-control differences in the asymmetry of regional or global measures of cortical thickness or surface area. This result indicates that none of the cortical case-control differences reported by the previous large-scale ENIGMA study (38) are significantly lateralized, even when they might have been reported with respect to only one side. We also used a multivariable measure to describe the typicality of each participant's asymmetry pattern over all cortical regions with respect to a healthy and general population database (40). However, no case-control difference in this measure was found. Together, these analyses indicate that alterations of cerebrocortical anatomical asymmetry are not notable features of pediatric OCD.

In the adult data, there was no evidence for case-control differences of regional asymmetries for either subcortical or cortical measures. The strongest cortical effect in adults was at the total hemispheric level, whereby cases showed slightly more rightward asymmetry of total surface area, mainly due to having a relatively smaller surface area in the left hemisphere than that of control subjects. However, this very small effect, with Cohen's *d* of 0.086, was not significant in the context of multiple testing, so that further studies with even larger sample sizes will be needed to confirm or refute this result. The effect was more pronounced in cases with comorbid depression, although this observation also remains tentative in the context of multiple testing.

Consistent with previous findings of distinct alterations between pediatric and adult patients by the ENIGMA OCD Working Group (38,39), this study of structural asymmetry also showed different OCD-related effects between pediatric and adult data. There was also no correlation of case-control asymmetry differences between pediatric and adult data across the 34 cortical regions. Nonetheless, it is intriguing that the most notable effects in the pediatric and adult data all involved predominantly left-hemisphere alterations, a finding that might support previous models of left-hemisphere dysfunction in OCD, as has been suggested by some functional imaging and neuropsychological findings (see the Introduction) (23,27–29). However, it will be important for future functional imaging studies to avoid reporting lateralized dysfunction when only one of the two hemispheres shows significant case-control differences. A hemispheric difference

of significance does not necessarily indicate a significant difference of effects between hemispheres.

OCD is a heterogeneous neuropsychiatric condition with a heritability of roughly 40%, as has been observed using both twin- and/or family-based estimation and single nucleotide polymorphism-based estimation (5,56). A recent study showed that genetic variation across the genome, which affects risk for OCD, also includes variation that affects the volumes of the nucleus accumbens and putamen (57). The structural brain asymmetries that exhibited the strongest associations with OCD in this study have been shown to have significant heritability: 23% for the volume asymmetry of the thalamus, 15% for the volume asymmetry of the pallidum (43), and 17% for the total hemispheric asymmetry of cerebrocortical surface area (40). It may therefore be useful in future studies to assess the genetic correlation between these aspects of brain asymmetry and OCD, which might lead toward genome-wide association studies (58) to identify individual genetic loci that are involved in OCD-related asymmetry abnormalities.

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional study design limits the interpretation of the results, particularly with respect to age-related changes. Further work using longitudinal studies and incorporating genetic and environmental variables may be useful to understand the mechanisms underlying the potential associations reported here. Second, while the region-based approach used in this study is feasible for large-scale, collaborative projects, it is necessarily limited in terms of spatial resolution, and this limitation might have contributed to some of the null results for regional cortical or subcortical regions. Investigation with more refined definition of regions [e.g., subregions of the thalamus (59)] or a vertex-wise approach combined with cross-hemispheric registration methods will be likely to be useful for future cortical asymmetry studies (60,61). Third, the symptoms of OCD are heterogeneous (4). Identifying potential subtypes of OCD could therefore provide further insights into the pathophysiology.

In summary, we mapped structural brain asymmetry in pediatric and adult OCD as compared with that of control subjects, using by far the largest sample size to date. Effects were small overall, and they were most pronounced in the thalamus and the pallidum in pediatric patients, a finding that also showed potential links with medication status, disorder severity, or anxiety and depression comorbidities. Our study adds to literature implicating the thalamus in the pathophysiology of pediatric OCD, and it additionally implicates the pallidum in pediatric cases.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DISCLOSURES

This research was funded by the Max Planck Society (Germany). Additional funding was from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (KAKENHI Grant No. 18K15523 [to YA], KAKENHI Grant No. 16K04344 [to YH], KAKENHI Grant Nos. 16K19778 and 18K07608 [to TNakam], and KAKENHI Grant No. 26461762 [to AN]); the Carlos III Health Institute (Grant No. PI14/00419 [to PA], Grant No. PI040829 cofunded by European Regional Development Fund [to LL], Grant No. FI17/00294 [to IM-Z], Grant No. PI16/00950 [to JMM], and Grant Nos. CPII16/00048, PI13/01958, and PI16/00889 cofunded by European Regional Development Funds [to CS-M]); the Ontario Mental Health Foundation (Research Training Fellowship [to SHA]); Alberta Innovates Translational Health Chair in Child and Youth Mental Health (to PDA), the Ontario Brain Institute (to PDA); the National Institute of Mental

Health (Grant No. K23MH104515 [to JTB], Grant No. K23-MH092397 [to BPB], Grant No. K23MH082176 [to KDF], Grant No. R21MH101441 [to RM], Grant No. R01MH081864 [to JO and JP], and Grant No. R01MH085900 [to JO and JF], Grant No. R21MH093889 [to HBS]); Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Grant No. 2011/21357-9 [to MCB], Grant No. 2011/21357-9 [to GFB], Grant No. 2011/21357-9 [to MQH], and Grant No. 2011/21357-9 [to ECM]); the Swiss National Science Foundation (Grant No. 320030_130237 [to SB; principal investigator, Susanne Walitza]); the Hartmann Müller Foundation (Grant No. 1460 [to SB]); the David Judah Fund at the Massachusetts General Hospital (to BPB); EU FP7 Project TACTICS (Grant No. 278948 [to JB]); the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Grant No. 81560233 [to YC] and Grant No. 81371340 [to ZW]); the International OCD Foundation (Grant No. K23 MH115206 [to PG]); the Wellcome Sir Henry Dale Fellowship (Grant No. 211155/Z/18/Z [to TUH]); the Jacobs Foundation (to TUH); the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation (2018 NARSAD Young Investigator Grant No. 27023 [to TUH]); the Agency for Medical Research and Development (Grant No. JP18dm0307002 [to YH]); the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (to FJ-F); the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany (Grant No. BMBF-01GW0724 [to NK]); the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Grant No. KO 3744/7-1 [to KK]); the Helse Vest Health Authority (Grant Nos. 911754 and 911880 [to GK]); the Norwegian Research Council (Grant No. HELSEFORSK 243675 [to GK]); the Marató TV3 Foundation (Grant Nos. 01/2010 and 091710 [to LL]); the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants (Grant No. 2017 SGR 881 [to LL] and 2017 SGR 1247 from the Generalitat de Catalunya [to JMM]); Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (Grant No. PDE/BDE/113604/2015 from the PhD-iHES Program [to RM], Grant No. PDE/BDE/113601/2015 from the PhD-iHES Program [to PSM]); the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Grant Nos. 22591262, 25461732, and 16K10253 [to TNakao]); the Government of India Department of Science and Technology (DST INSPIRE Faculty Grant No. -IFA12-LSBM-26 [to JCN] and Grant No. SR/SO/HS/0016/2011 [to YCJR]); the Government of India Department of Biotechnology (Grant No. BT/06/IYBA/2012 [to JCN] and Grant No. BT/PR13334/Med/30/259/2009 [to YCJR]); the New York State Office of Mental Health (to HBS); the Italian Ministry of Health (Grant No. RC13-14-15-16A [to GS]); the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (Grant No. UL1TR000067/KL2TR000069 [to ERS]); the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (to SES); the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (to SES); the British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority (to SES); the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (Grant No. NWO/ZonMW Vidi 917.15.318 [to GAvW]); the Wellcome-DBT India Alliance (Grant No. 500236/Z/11/Z [to GV]); the Shanghai Key Laboratory of Psychotic Disorders (Grant No. 13dz2260500 [to ZW]).

JTB received consulting income from Pear Therapeutics and Niraax Therapeutics. BPB received consulting fees from Rugen Therapeutics and Nobilis Therapeutics and research grant support from Eli Lilly, Transcept Pharmaceuticals, and Biohaven Pharmaceuticals. DM-C receives royalties for contributing articles to UpToDate and Wolters Kluwer Health and fees from Elsevier in his role as associate editor. HBS receives royalties from UpToDate and Cambridge University Press and current research support from Biohaven for a multisite industry-sponsored clinical trial. All other authors report no biomedical financial interests or potential conflicts of interest.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

From the Language and Genetics Department (X-ZK, CF), Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics; Department of Cognitive Neuroscience (JB, DvR), Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behavior (CF), Radboud University, Nijmegen; Department of Psychiatry (PSWB, OAvdH) and Department of Anatomy and Neurosciences (PSWB, OAvdH), Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; Department of Psychiatry (DD, EAF, GAvW), Amsterdam Neuroscience; Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CH), Amsterdam University Medical Center, University of Amsterdam; Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience (DD), Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences; De Bascule (CH), Academic Center for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Department of Psychiatry (YA, TNakam, YS), Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto

Prefectural University of Medicine; ATR Brain Information Communication Research Laboratory Group (YS), Kyoto; Research Center for Child Mental Development (YH, MK, AN, AT), Chiba University, Chiba; and Department of Neuropsychiatry (TNakao), Graduate School of Medical Sciences, Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan; Department of Psychiatry (PA, IM-Z, JMM, CS-M), Bellvitge University Hospital, Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute-Institut d'Investigació Biomèdica de Bellvitge, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat; Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental-CIBERSAM (PA, JMM); Department of Clinical Sciences (PA, IM-Z, JMM), University of Barcelona; Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology (RC, LL, AM), Institute of Neurosciences, Hospital Clínic Universitari; Department of Medicine (RC, LL, AM), University of Barcelona; Magnetic Resonance Image Core Facility (JCP), Institut d'Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer (IDIBAPS) (LL, AM); Department of Psychobiology and Methodology of Health Sciences (CS-M), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona; Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental (CIBERSAM) (RC, LL, AM, CS-M), Madrid, Spain; The Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health (SHA), Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute, The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto; Centre for Brain and Mental Health (SHA), The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto; Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research and Education (PDA), Hotchkiss Brain Institute, and Department of Psychiatry (PDA), Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta; Department of Psychiatry (SES), University of British Columbia (FJ-F); Provincial Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Program (SES), British Columbia Children's Hospital, Vancouver, British Columbia; Mood Disorders Clinic (LM) and Pediatric OCD Consultation Service, Anxiety Treatment and Research Center (NS), St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry (FA, FaP, FeP, GS), Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome; Psychiatry and Clinical Psychobiology (FB, IB, SD), Division of Neuroscience, Scientific Institute Ospedale San Raffaele, Milano, Italy; McLean Hospital (JTB, BPB, CPe), Harvard Medical School, Belmont, Massachusetts; Department of Neuroscience (BAE), Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (PRS); Columbia University Irving Medical Center (RM, HBS), and The Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (RM), New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia University; Center for OCD and Related Disorders (HBS), New York State Psychiatric Institute; Department of Psychiatry (ERS), New York University School of Medicine, New York; James J. Peters VA Medical Center (PRS), Bronx; Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research (ERS), Orangeburg, New York; Department of Psychiatry (DCG, PG, CPI), Yale University School of Medicine (MCS, DFT), New Haven; Olin Neuropsychiatric Research Center (DCG); Clinical Neuroscience and Development Laboratory (MCS), Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center; Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital (DFT), Hartford, Connecticut; Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences (JF, ELN, JO, JP), University of California, Los Angeles; Imaging Genetics Center (PMT), Mark and Mary Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, Marina del Rey, California; Department of Psychiatry (KDF, YL), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (CPe), Champaign, Illinois; Beth K. and Stuart C. Yudofsky Division of Neuropsychiatry (GS), Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas; Laureate Institute for Brain Research (AT), Tulsa, Oklahoma; Departamento e Instituto de Psiquiatria do Hospital das Clínicas (MCB, MQH), IPQ HCFMUSP, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo; Center of Mathematics (JRS), Computing and Cognition, Universidade Federal do ABC, Santo André, Brazil; Department of Psychology (JCB, KN, CK), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin; Department of Neuroradiology (DAG, KK) and TUM-Neuroimaging Center (TUM-NIC) of Klinikum Rechts der Isar (DAG, KK), Technische Universität München, München, Germany; University of Zürich (OGR-O), University Hospital Zürich; Department of Neuroradiology; Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (SB, TUH), Psychiatric Hospital, University of Zürich; Neuroscience Center Zürich (SB), University of Zürich and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland; Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Clinic (AB, JCN, JR, GV), Department of Psychiatry National Institute of Mental

Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India; Department of Psychiatry (YC), First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University; Shanghai Mental Health Center (ZW), Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine (HH); Shanghai Key Laboratory of Psychotic Disorders (ZW), Shanghai, People's Republic of China; Institute of Human Behavioral Medicine (KIKC), Seoul National University Medical Research Center; Department of Psychiatry (JSK) and Yeongseon Student Support Center (J-YY), Seoul National University College of Medicine; Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences (JSK), Seoul National University College of Natural Sciences; Seoul National University Hospital (J-YY), Seoul, Republic of Korea; Department of Psychiatry (J-PF) and SU/UCT MRC Unit on Risk and Resilience in Mental Disorders (DJS), Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, University of Cape Town; SU/UCT MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders (CL), Department of Psychiatry (J-PF), University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa; Max Planck UCL Centre for Computational Psychiatry and Ageing Research (TUH); Wellcome Centre for Human Neuroimaging (TUH), University College London, London; Department of Psychiatry (AJ), Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom; OCD Team (GK), Haukeland University Hospital; Department of Clinical Psychology (GK), University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute (ICVS) (PMA, PSM, PMO), School of Medicine, University of Minho; Clinical Academic Center-Braga (PMA, PSM, PMO), Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute (ICVS)/3B's (PMA, PSM, PMO), PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães, Portugal; Department of Clinical Neuroscience (DM-C), Centre for Psychiatry Research, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; Psychiatric Genetics (SEM), QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, Brisbane, Queensland; Orygen (LS), The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, Parkville; Centre for Youth Mental Health (LS), The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

The ENIGMA OCD Working Group: Xiang-Zhen Kong (Language and Genetics Department, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, The Netherlands), Premika S.W. Boedhoe (Department of Psychiatry and Department of Anatomy and Neurosciences, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Yoshinari Abe (Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Pino Alonso (Department of Psychiatry, Bellvitge University Hospital, Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute-Institut d'Investigació Biomèdica de Bellvitge, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat; Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental-CIBERSAM; and Department of Clinical Sciences, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain), Stephanie H. Ameis (The Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health, Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute, The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto; and Centre for Brain and Mental Health, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Ontario, Canada), Alan Anticevic (Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut), Paul D. Arnold (Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research and Education, Hotchkiss Brain Institute, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary; and Department of Psychiatry, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada), Francesca Assogna (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome, Italy), Justin T. Baker (McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Belmont, Massachusetts), Nerisa Banaj (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome, Italy), Nuria Bargalló (Magnetic Resonance Image Core Facility, IDIBAPS; and Image Diagnostic Center, Hospital Clínic, Barcelona, Spain), Marcelo C. Batistuzzo (Departamento e Instituto de Psiquiatria do Hospital das Clínicas, IPQ HCFMUSP, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil), Francesco Benedetti (Psychiatry and Clinical Psychobiology, Division of Neuroscience, Scientific Institute Ospedale San Raffaele, Milano, Italy), Jan C. Beucke (Department of Psychology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany), Irene Bollettini (Psychiatry and Clinical Psychobiology, Division of Neuroscience, Scientific Institute Ospedale San Raffaele, Milano, Italy), Anushree Bose (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Clinic, Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India), Daniel Brandeis (Department

of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Psychiatric Hospital, University of Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland; Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Central Institute of Mental Health, Medical Faculty, Mannheim, Heidelberg University, Mannheim, Germany), Silvia Brem (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Psychiatric Hospital, University of Zürich; and Neuroscience Center Zürich, University of Zürich and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland), Brian P. Brennan (McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Belmont, Massachusetts), Jan Buitelaar (Department of Cognitive Neuroscience, Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behavior, Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, The Netherlands), Geraldo F. Busatto (Departamento e Instituto de Psiquiatria do Hospital das Clínicas, IPQ HCFMUSP, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil), Anna Calvo (Magnetic Resonance Image Core Facility, Institut d'investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer, Barcelona, Spain), Rosa Calvo (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, Institute of Neurosciences, Hospital Clinic Universitari; Department of Medicine, University of Barcelona; and Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental, Barcelona, Spain), Yuqi Cheng (Department of Psychiatry, First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, Kunming, China), Kang Ik K. Cho (Institute of Human Behavioral Medicine, Seoul National University Medical Research Center, Seoul, Republic of Korea), Valentina Ciollo (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome; and Department of Neurosciences, Psychology, Drug Research and Child Health (NEURO-FARBA), University of Florence, Florence, Italy), Sara Dallspezia (Psychiatry and Clinical Psychobiology, Division of Neuroscience, Scientific Institute Ospedale San Raffaele, Milano, Italy), Damiaan Denys (Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, University of Amsterdam; and Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Froukje E. de Vries (Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Stella J. de Wit (Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Erin Dickie (Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute, The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada), Renate Drechsler (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Psychiatric Hospital, University of Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland), Benjamin A. Ely (Department of Neuroscience, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, New York), Madalena Esteves (Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS], School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS]/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães; and Clinical Academic Center-Braga, Braga, Portugal), Andrea Falini (Neuroradiology, Division of Neuroscience, Scientific Institute Ospedale San Raffaele, Milano, Italy), Yu Fang (Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan), Jamie Feusner (Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California), Martijn Figee (Department of Psychiatry, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, New York; and Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Kate D. Fitzgerald (Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan), Martine Fontaine (Columbia University Irving Medical Center, Columbia University, New York, New York), Jean-Paul Fouche (Department of Psychiatry, University of Cape Town; and Department of Psychiatry, University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa), Egill A. Fridegrsön (Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Patrícia Gruner (Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut), Deniz A. Gürsel (Department of Neuroradiology and Neuroimaging Center at the Technische Universität München, Klinikum Rechts der Isar, Technische Universität München, München, Germany), Geoff Hall (Department of Psychology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), Sayo Hamatani (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba,

Japan), Gregory L. Hanna (Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan), Bjarne Hansen (OCD Team, Haukeland University Hospital; and Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway), Tobias U. Hauser (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Psychiatric Hospital, University of Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland; and Max Planck University College London Centre for Computational Psychiatry and Ageing Research; and Wellcome Centre for Human Neuroimaging, University College London, London, United Kingdom), Yoshiyuki Hirano (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan), Marcelo Q. Hoexter (Departamento e Instituto de Psiquiatria do Hospital das Clínicas, IPQ HCFMUSP, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil), Hao Hu (Shanghai Mental Health Center Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, People's Republic of China), Chaim Huyser (De Bascule, Academic Center for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; and Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Keisuke Ikari (Department of Neuropsychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Sciences, Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan), Neda Jahanshad (Imaging Genetics Center, Mark and Mary Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute, Keck School of Medicine of University of Southern California, Marina del Rey, California), Anthony James (Department of Psychiatry, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom), Fern Jaspers-Fayer (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada), Norbert Kathmann (Department of Psychology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany), Christian Kaufmann (Department of Psychology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany), Kathrin Koch (Department of Neuroradiology and Neuroimaging Center at the Technische Universität München, Klinikum Rechts der Isar, Technische Universität München, München, Germany), Masaru Kuno (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan), Gerd Kvale (OCD Team, Haukeland University Hospital; and Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway), Jun Soo Kwon (Department of Psychiatry, Seoul National University College of Medicine; and Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, Seoul National University College of Natural Sciences, Seoul, Republic of Korea), Luisa Lazaro (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, Institute of Neurosciences, Hospital Clinic Universitari; Institut d'investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer; Department of Medicine, University of Barcelona; and Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental, Barcelona, Spain), Yanni Liu (Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan), Christine Lochner (Stellenbosch University/University of Cape Town Medical Research Center Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders, Department of Psychiatry, University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa), Ricardo Magalhães (Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS], School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS]/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães; and Clinical Academic Center-Braga, Braga, Portugal), Paulo Marques (Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS], School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS]/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães; and Clinical Academic Center-Braga, Braga, Portugal), Rachel Marsh (Columbia University Irving Medical Center; and Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia University, New York, New York), Ignacio Martínez-Zalacáin (Department of Psychiatry, Bellvitge University Hospital, Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute-Institut d'Investigació Biomèdica de Bellvitge, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat; and Department of Clinical Sciences, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain), Yasutaka Masuda (Department of Radiology, Chiba University Hospital, Chiba, Japan), David Mataix-Cols (Department of Clinical Neuroscience, Centre for Psychiatry Research, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden), Koji Matsumoto (Department of Radiology, Chiba University Hospital, Chiba, Japan), James T. McCracken (Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California), José M. Menchón (Department of Psychiatry, Bellvitge University Hospital, Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute-Institut d'Investigació Biomèdica de Bellvitge, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat; Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental-CIBERSAM; and Department of Clinical Sciences, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain), Euripedes C. Miguel (Departamento e Instituto de Psiquiatria do

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Hospital das Clínicas, IPQ HCFMUSP, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil), Luciano Minuzzi (Mood Disorders Clinic, St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), Pedro S. Moreira (Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS], School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS]/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães; and Clinical Academic Center-Braga, Braga, Portugal), Astrid Morer (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, Institute of Neurosciences, Hospital Clínic Universitari; Institut d'investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer; Department of Medicine, University of Barcelona; and Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental), Pedro Morgado (Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS], School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS]/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães; and Clinical Academic Center-Braga, Braga, Portugal), Akiko Nakagawa (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan), Takashi Nakamae (Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Tomohiro Nakao (Department of Neuropsychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Sciences, Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan), Janardhanan C. Narayanaswamy (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Clinic, Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India), Jin Narumoto (Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Seiji Nishida (Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Erika L. Nurmi (Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California), Joseph O'Neill (Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California), Jose C. Pariente (Magnetic Resonance Image Core Facility, Institut d'investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer, Barcelona, Spain), Chris Perriello (McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Belmont, Massachusetts; and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois), John Piacentini (Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California), Fabrizio Piras (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome, Italy), Federica Piras (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome, Italy), Christopher Pittenger (Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut), Sara Poletti (Psychiatry and Clinical Psychobiology, Division of Neuroscience, Scientific Institute Ospedale San Raffaele, Milano, Italy), Y.C. Janardhan Reddy (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Clinic, Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India), Tim Reess (Department of Neuroradiology and Neuroimaging Center at the Technische Universität München, Klinikum Rechts der Isar, Technische Universität München, München, Germany), Oana Georgiana Rus-Oswald (University of Zürich, University Hospital Zürich, Dept. Neuroradiology, Zürich, Switzerland), Yuki Sakai (ATR Brain Information Communication Research Laboratory Group; and Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Joao R. Sato (Center of Mathematics, Computing and Cognition, Universidade Federal do ABC, Santo André, Brazil), Lianne Schmaal (Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, Parkville; and Centre for Youth Mental Health, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia), Eiji Shimizu (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University; and Department of Cognitive Behavioral Physiology, Graduate School of Medicine, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan), H. Blair Simpson (Columbia University Irving Medical Center, Columbia University; and Center for OCD and Related Disorders, New York State Psychiatric Institute, New York, New York), Noam Soreni (Pediatric OCD Consultation Service, Anxiety Treatment and Research Center, St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), Carles Soriano-Mas (Department of Psychiatry, Bellvitge University Hospital, Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute-Institut d'Investigació Biomèdica de Bellvitge, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat; Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental-CIBERSAM; and Department of Psychobiology and Methodology of Health Sciences, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,

Barcelona, Spain), Nuno Sousa (Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS], School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga; Life and Health Sciences Research Institute [ICVS]/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães; and Clinical Academic Center-Braga, Braga, Portugal), Gianfranco Spalletta (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome, Italy; and Beth K. and Stuart C. Yudofsky Division of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas), Emily R. Stern (Department of Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, New York; and Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research, Orangeburg, New York), Michael C. Stevens (Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven; and Clinical Neuroscience and Development Laboratory, Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, Hartford, Connecticut), S. Evelyn Stewart (Department of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia; and Provincial Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Program, British Columbia Children's Hospital, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada), Philip R. Szaszko (Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York; and James J. Peters VA Medical Center, Bronx, New York), Jumpei Takahashi (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan), Jinsong Tang (Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California), Anders Lillevik Thorsen (OCD Team, Haukeland University Hospital; Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway; and Department of Anatomy and Neurosciences, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), David F. Tolin (Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital, Hartford; and Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut), Aki Tsuchiyagaito (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan; and Laureate Institute for Brain Research, Tulsa, Oklahoma), Daan van Rooij (Department of Cognitive Neuroscience, Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behavior, Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, The Netherlands), Guido A. van Wingen (Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Ysbrand D. van der Werf (Department of Anatomy and Neurosciences, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Dick J. Veltman (Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Daniela Vecchio (Laboratory of Neuropsychiatry, Department of Clinical and Behavioral Neurology, Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico Santa Lucia Foundation, Rome, Italy), Ganesan Venkatasubramanian (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Clinic, Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India), Susanne Walitza (Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Psychiatric Hospital, University of Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland), Zhen Wang (Shanghai Mental Health Center Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine; and Shanghai Key Laboratory of Psychotic Disorders, People's Republic of China), Anri Watanabe (Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Jian Xu (Department of Internal Medicine, First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, Kunming, People's Republic of China), Xiufeng Xu (Department of Psychiatry, First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, Kunming, China), Kei Yamada (Department of Radiology, Graduate School of Medical Science Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, Japan), Tokiko Yoshida (Research Center for Child Mental Development, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan), Je-Yeon Yun (Seoul National University Hospital; and Yeongseon Student Support Center, Seoul National University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea), Mojtaba Zarei (Institute of Medical Science and Technology, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran), Qing Zhao (Shanghai Mental Health Center Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, People's Republic of China), Cong Zhou (Department of Psychiatry, First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, Kunming, China), Paul M. Thompson (Imaging Genetics Center, Mark and Mary Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, Marina del Rey, California), Dan J. Stein (Stellenbosch University/University of Cape Town Medical Research Center Unit on Risk and Resilience in Mental Disorders, Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, University of Cape Town,

Cape Town, South Africa), Odile A. van den Heuvel (Department of Psychiatry and Department of Anatomy and Neurosciences, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Clyde Francks (Language and Genetics Department, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics; and Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behavior, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands).

Address correspondence to Clyde Francks, D.Phil., Wundtlaan 1, 6525 XD Nijmegen, The Netherlands; E-mail: clyde.francks@mpi.nl; or Xiang-Zhen Kong, Ph.D., Wundtlaan 1, 6525 XD Nijmegen, The Netherlands; E-mail: xiangzhen.kong@outlook.com.

Received Nov 20, 2018; revised Mar 21, 2019; accepted Apr 10, 2019.

Supplementary material cited in this article is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2019.04.022>.

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