



Press Conference on the occasion of the 23rd ECNP Congress 2010

**Amsterdam RAI Exhibition & Convention Centre (ICEC)
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Sunday, 29 August 2010, 10.00–10.45 hours**

Teaser

TITLE: Developmental gene-environment interactions: a model for psychosis

SPEAKER: Professor Dr. Jim van Os, Department of Psychiatry and Neuropsychology, Maastricht University Medical Centre, The Netherlands

Schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders are the most mysterious and costliest of mental disorders in terms of human suffering and societal expenditure, representing a major challenge to scientists. Until recently, researchers had relatively few starting points in trying to unravel the causes of psychosis and to identify better treatments. While epidemiological research has characterised powerful environmental effects on schizophrenia risk, twin and family studies have established that more than half of the vulnerability for schizophrenia is of genetic origin. However, despite enormous investments, it has proven extremely difficult to identify molecular genetic variants underlying schizophrenia liability. According to the model of gene-environment interaction, genes influencing schizophrenia risk may do so indirectly by making individuals more sensitive to the effects of causal environmental risk factors (e.g. urbanisation, migration, cannabis use, childhood trauma). Now, for the first time, a focused scientific collaboration has been organised in Europe in order to elucidate the causes of schizophrenia, focussing on both genes and environments in the same research project.

Professor Dr. Jim van Os, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Neuropsychology at Maastricht University Medical Centre, The Netherlands, will present the EU-GEI project, involving more than 7,500 patients and their families, which brings together a multidisciplinary research team from 15 countries in the largest effort to date to find gene-environment interactions underlying schizophrenia risk. In particular, he will explain the development of tools that will make it possible to monitor, and possibly modify, vulnerability at the behavioural level, thus preventing transition to overt illness.

For further information please come to the press conference!

We hope that the 23rd ECNP Congress will highlight the contribution of neuropsychopharmacology to medical practice and help all of us in raising the awareness for mental disorders both among physicians, researchers and the public.

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