

MEDIA ALERT

EMBARGOED: 12:01AM AEDT, TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025

Unravelling the genetic code of anxiety disorders

AUS researchers seeking 5,000 adults diagnosed with anxiety for groundbreaking 'Living with Anxiety' genetics study

Aussie researchers will call for 5,000 adult (18+ years) volunteers diagnosed with, or treated for an anxiety disorder, for their groundbreaking Living with Anxiety (LwA) study tomorrow ([Tuesday, March 18, 2025](#)).

The LwA study aims to identify genes that influence a person's risk of developing anxiety, and response to treatment, with the goal of improving diagnosis, management and treatment.

The researchers' appeal for volunteers will coincide with the publication of their article in [MJA Insight+](#), explaining how the LwA study is promising to pave the way toward more personalised and optimised anxiety disorder treatments.¹



Anxiety disorders:

- affect 3.4 million Australians aged 16-85 years each year;¹
- represent the nation's most common mental health condition;¹
- present in various forms;²
- are often associated with other conditions, such as depression;¹
- can significantly compromise daily functioning and overall wellbeing;^{1, 3-5}
- and depressive disorders are among the most common reasons patients visit their GP.⁶

While psychological therapies are usually the first, and most effective treatment option⁷ for these life-disrupting anxiety disorders,⁸ medication is also commonly prescribed. Finding the right medication can, however, prove time-consuming and complex.⁹

Around one-in-five people who take medication for their anxiety experience distressing side-effects,¹⁰ which often leads to treatment cessation,¹¹ while up to 65 per cent may fail to respond to prescribed treatments due to their genetic make-up.¹²

Large scale studies like the LwA study are crucial for advancing the science of how our DNA influences medication responses.¹³

Unravelling the genetics of anxiety disorders will enable the development of new, and more effective, personalised treatments, better able to target the problem directly.

To learn more about the LwA study and the *MJA Insight+* article, tee up an interview with a spokesperson overleaf.

To volunteer for the Living with Anxiety (LwA) study, head to livingwithanxiety.org.au or email lwa@qimrb.edu.au.

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

EXPERTS	
Professor Sarah Medland, OAM	Lead Investigator, LwA study, & Head, Psychiatric Genetics Group, QIMR Berghofer, BRISBANE
Professor Nick Martin	Co-Investigator, LwA study, & Head, Genetic Epidemiology, QIMR Berghofer, BRISBANE
Professor Ian Hickie, AM	Co-Investigator, LwA study; Professor of Psychiatry, & Co-Director, Health & Policy, Brain & Mind Centre, The University of Sydney, SYDNEY
A/Professor Elizabeth Scott	Co-Investigator, LwA study, Principal Research Fellow & Academic Lead, Brain & Mind Centre, The University of Sydney, SYDNEY
Professor Malcolm Hopwood	Chair of Psychiatry, Ramsay Health Care, & Professor of Psychiatry, University of Melbourne, MELBOURNE
Professor Sarah Cullen-Woods	Professor of Psychology, Flinders University Institute for Mental Health & Wellbeing, & Head, Behavioural Genetic & Environmental Mechanisms Lab, Flinders University, ADELAIDE
Professor Sean Hood	Consultant Psychiatrist, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital & The Marian Centre, Wembley; Psychiatrist Academic, University of Western Australia; & Head, UWA Division of Psychiatry, PERTH
PATIENT ADVOCACY GROUP REPRESENTATIVE	
Ms Georgie Harman	Chief Executive Officer, Beyond Blue, MELBOURNE
AUSTRALIANS LIVING WITH ANXIETY	
Krish, 26	Small business owner & outdoors enthusiast who changed her lifestyle to better manage her anxiety, BLUE MOUNTAINS
Alexis, 43	Lived Experience Researcher who has faced anxiety for many years, SYDNEY
Rachel, 52	Former police officer turned children's author who has lived with feelings of anxiety since she was 10, NEWCASTLE
Fiona, 41	Office administrator & mother-to-three who has grappled with feelings of anxiety since childhood, BRISBANE
Camille, 33	Workplace consultant who overcame anxiety and now helps others with mental health challenges, SUNSHINE COAST
Liv, 37	Romance author diagnosed with generalised anxiety a decade ago, MELBOURNE
Mary, 43	Mother-to-one, wife & legal operations consultant who lives with anxiety & depression, MELBOURNE
Melanie, 37	Operations administrator who has lived with feelings of anxiety since childhood, MELBOURNE
Sean, 49	Health & safety officer & former police officer who silently endured symptoms of anxiety for many years, TASMANIA
Janine, 49	Public servant who has been living with symptoms of anxiety since puberty, ADELAIDE
James, 49	Web developer who has battled feelings of anxiety for most of his life, PERTH
DIGITAL MEDIA KIT	www.livingwithanxietymediakit.org
VIDEO NEWS RELEASE (VNR)	www.livingwithanxietymediakit.org/vnr
AUDIO NEWS RELEASE (ANR)	www.livingwithanxietymediakit.org/anr
MEDIA CONTACTS + INTERVIEWS	Kirsten Bruce & Sam Jacobs, VIVA! Communications M 0401 717 566 0422 654 404 T 02 9968 3741 02 9968 1604 E kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au sam@vivacommunications.com.au

Should you suspect that you, or a loved one, may be living with anxiety, speak to your local healthcare practitioner without delay.

Australian professional patient support services offering 24/7 helpline services include:

- **Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636**
- **Lifeline: 13 11 14**
- **MensLine: 1300 78 9978**
- **MindSpot Clinic: 1800 61 4434**
- **SANE Australia: 1800 18 7263**
- **Headspace on 1800 650 890.**

References

1. National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing [Internet]. Canberra: ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics; 2023 [Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release>].
2. Anxiety disorders: National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH); [Available from: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders>].
3. Anxiety: healthdirect; 2024 [Available from: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/anxiety>].
4. Kvaal K, McDougall FA, Brayne C, Matthews FE, Dewey ME. Co-occurrence of anxiety and depressive disorders in a community sample of older people: results from the MRC CFAS (Medical Research Council Cognitive Function and Ageing Study). *Int J Geriatr Psychiatry*. 2008;23(3):229-37.
5. American Psychiatric A. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5-TR. Fifth edition, text revision. ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing; 2022.
6. General Practice - Health of the Nation - An annual insight into the state of Australian general practice: RACGP; 2024 [Available from: <https://www.racgp.org.au/general-practice-health-of-the-nation>].
7. Anxiety Treatment: Black Dog Institute; [Available from: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/anxiety/treatment/>].
8. Anxiety Disorders: National Institutes of Mental Health; [Available from: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders#:~:text=Anxiety%20disorder%20symptoms%20can%20interfere,refuse%20to%20leave%20their%20home>].
9. Antidepressants: healthdirect; [Available from: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/antidepressants#:~:text=headaches%20and%20dizziness,also%20known%20as%20serotonin%20syndrome>].
10. Whooley MA, Simon GE. Managing depression in medical outpatients. *N Engl J Med*. 2000;343(26):1942-50.
11. Kopcalic K, Arcaro J, Pinto A, Ali S, Barbui C, Curatoli C, et al. Antidepressants versus placebo for generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2025;1(1):Cd012942.
12. Krebs K, Milani L. Translating pharmacogenomics into clinical decisions: do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. *Human Genomics*. 2019;13(1):39.
13. Genomics and Your Health - Pharmacogenomics: CDC [Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/genomics-and-health/pharmacogenomics/index.html>].