Treating Schizophrenia Starts With Cognitive Battery Tests

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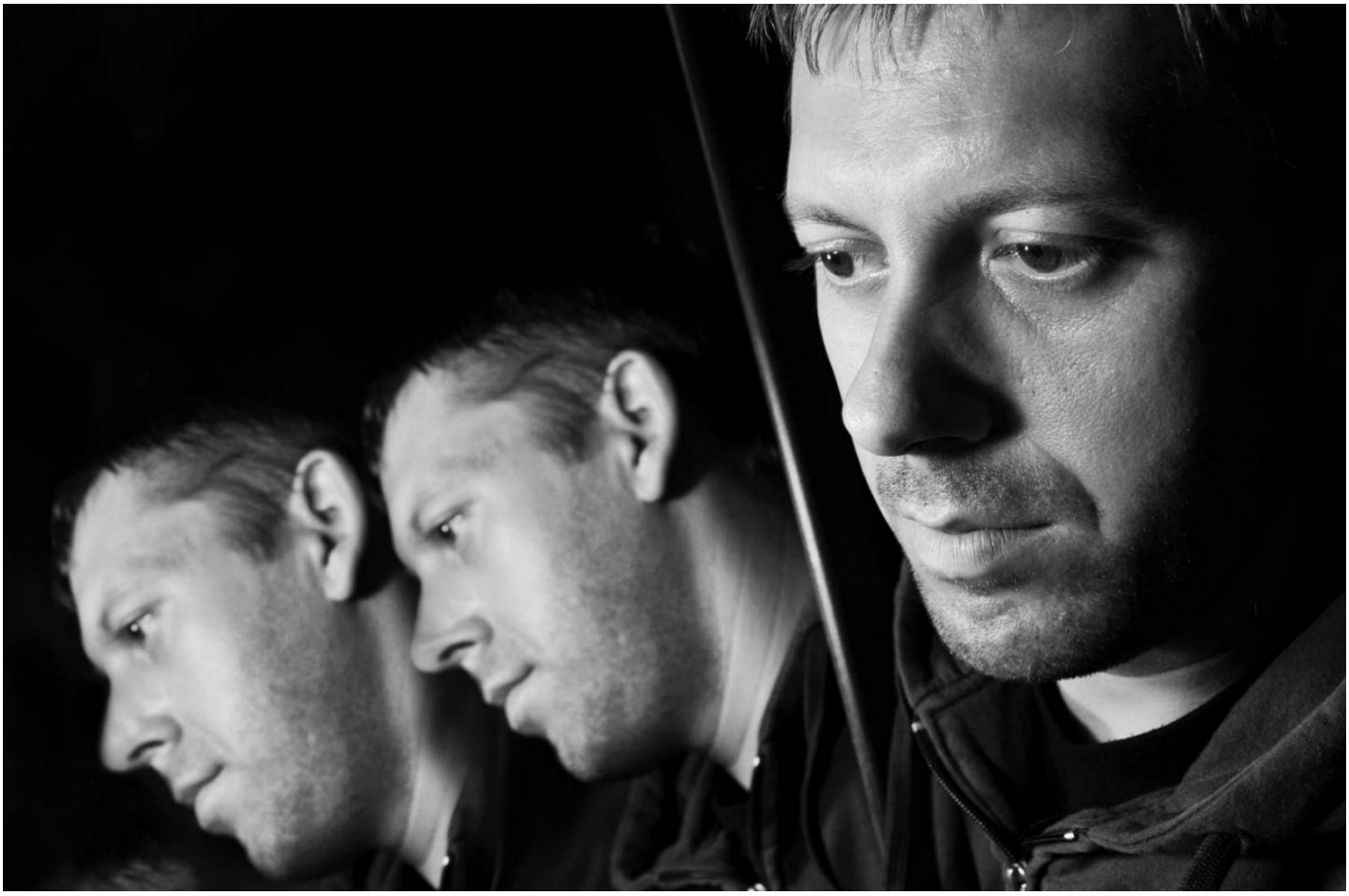

Cognitive deficiencies, such as having an impaired memory or the inability to focus attention, are key predictors of long-term disability for schizophrenia patients. Further, the current antipsychotic medications do not help these cognitive impairments.

To speed the development of new drugs that can possibly help these patients, researchers at the University of California in Los Angeles have designed a battery of tests to evaluate cognition in schizophrenia. The "MATRICS Consensus Cognitive Battery" (MCCB) was published in 2006 by Keith H. Nuechterlein, Ph.D., and Michael F. Green, Ph.D. Funding was provided by the National Institute of Mental Health's (NIMH) Division of Mental Disorders and Behavioral Research.

> *The MCCB was developed to help accomplish the goals of the National Institute of Mental Health's initiative, Measurement and Treatment Research to Improve Cognition in Schizophrenia (MATRICS).*

The absence of any standard measure of cognitive function that was accepted by the U.S. Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) for clinical trials of schizophrenia had been a critical obstacle in evaluating potential new medications for the core cognitive deficits. Thus, one of the key goals of MATRICS was to create a consensus cognitive performance test battery for future clinical trials.

The battery was designed with input from national experts in neuropsychology, clinical psychology, neuroscience, psychometrics and clinical trial design. It evaluates speed of processing, attention/vigilance, working memory, verbal learning, visual learning, reasoning and problem solving, and social cognition.

Recent scientific discoveries provide opportunities for developing medications that can improve cognitive function in schizophrenia. The MCCB has been endorsed by the NIMH and accepted by the FDA as the recommended battery for future clinical trials for potential cognition-enhancing drugs for schizophrenia.

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