Table 2 Results of image analyses

Anatomical regions	Brodmann area	Cluster size	Corrected P FDR	*T*-value (voxel level)	Talairach coordinates		
					x	*y*	*z*
Main effects							
Diagnosis effects (control > schizophrenia) (Fig. 3)							
Limbic system							
R insula	BA13	4682	0.000	6.41	33	11	−2
L insula	BA13	4017	0.000	8.81	−33	11	4
R parahippocampal gyrus, amygdala-uncus	BA36	4682	0.000	7.32	30	1	−17
R parahippocampal gyrus	BA36	186	0.000	5.04	30	−41	−8
L parahippocampal gyrus, hippocampus-amygdala	BA34/36	637	0.000	5.46	−20	−41	−8
R anterior cingulate cortex	BA32	147	0.000	4.9	9	33	20
L anterior cingulate cortex	BA32	200	0.000	4.63	−11	32	20
L cingulate gyrus	BA32	275	0.001	4.2	−12	−16	39
Prefrontal cortex							
R inferior frontal gyrus	BA47,11	145	0.000	4.99	27	28	−11
R superior frontal gyrus	BA8/9	1889	0.000	6.08	12	43	39
L medial frontal gyrus	BA9	1333	0.000	5.13	−8	47	19
L inferior frontal gyrus	BA45	141	0.000	4.55	−44	23	15
L middle frontal gyrus	BA8	482	0.000	4.44	−30	24	43
L superior frontal gyrus	BA8	482	0.000	4.39	−35	17	51
Premotor area							
R dorsal premotor area	BA6	429	0.000	4.37	41	13	45
Temporal cortex							
R superior temporal gyrus	BA22	806	0.000	5.04	47	−23	−1
R middle temporal gyrus	BA21	806	0.000	4.87	56	−15	−3
L superior temporal gyrus	BA38	4017	0.000	7	−36	1	−17
Central grey matter							
L thalamus		4017	0.000	7.26	−15	−17	2
Diagnosis effects (control < schizophrenia) (Fig. 4)							
L sylvian fissure		621	0.000	6.7	−45	17	−3
R sylvian fissure		774	0.000	6.59	44	17	−8
Lateral ventricle (anterior horn)		279	0.000	5.27	−5	21	4
Lateral ventricle (L inferior horn)		248	0.000	6.18	−41	−30	−10
Lateral ventricle (R inferior horn)		137	0.000	5.02	36	−40	−1
Interhemisphrenic fissure		154	0.000	5.28	3	55	−12
Genotype effects (Val/Val-COMT < Met-COMT carriers) (Fig. 5)							
Limbic system							
L anterior cingulate cortex	BA24/25	334	0.033	4.29	−8	17	−13
Temporal cortex							
R middle temporal gyrus	BA21	285	0.016	5.10	59	−3	−14
Genotype-diagnosis interaction effects (Fig. 6)							
Limbic system							
L anterior cingulate gyrus	BA24/25/32	264	0.044	3.77	−6	25	−6
L parahippocampal gyrus, amygdala-uncus	BA34	219	0.048	3.74	−24	−6	−14
The effects of polymorphism in control group (no significant difference)							
The effects of polymorphism in schizophrenia							
Val/Val-COMT < Val/Met, Met/Met-COMT (Fig. 7)							
Limbic system							
L parahippocampal gyrus, amygdala-uncus	BA28	81	0.010	4.17	−26	2	−22
L anterior cingulate cortex	BA24/25/32	263	0.007	4.38	−7	20	−8
Central grey matter							
L thalamus		91	0.014	3.94	−21	−28	6

and IQ, however, a significant genotype-by-diagnosis interaction effect was found in a visual memory measure (F = 4.605, df = 1, P = 0.03) (Table 1). However, a *post hoc t*-test (Bonferroni test) demonstrated no genotype effect in each diagnostic category (control: P = 0.15, schizophrenia: P = 0.11).

Morphological changes in schizophrenia (diagnosis effects)

In comparison with controls, patients with schizophrenia demonstrated a significant reduction of volumes in multiple brain areas, such as the limbic and paralimbic systems, neocortical areas and the subcortical regions (Table 2 and Fig. 3).

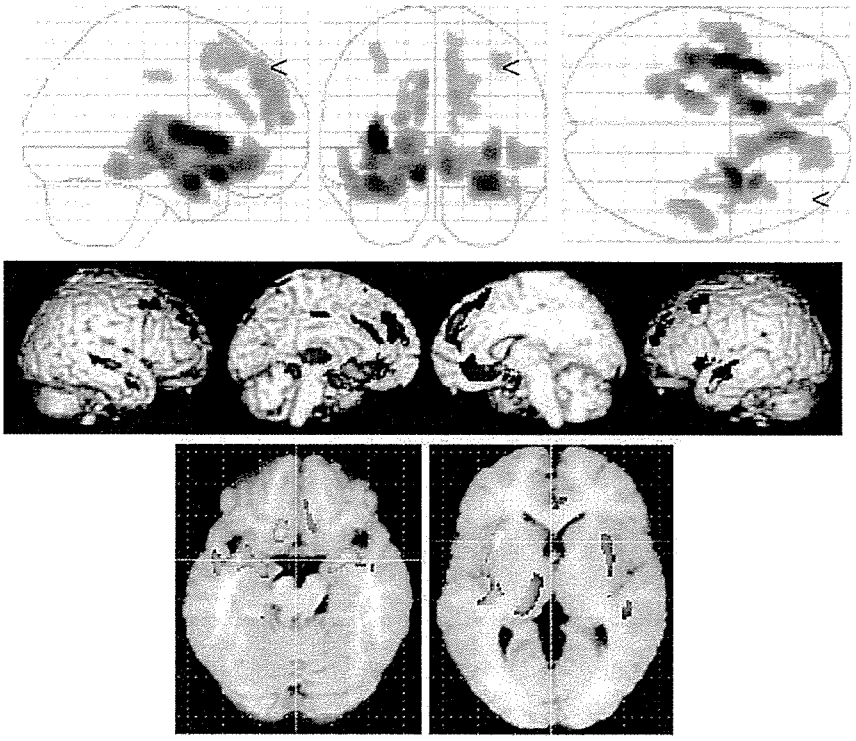

Fig. 3 Decreased volumes in schizophrenics ($n = 47$) as compared to controls ($n = 76$). *Top*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed in a standard format as a maximum-intensity projection (MIP) viewed from the right, the back and the top of the brain. The anatomical space corresponds to the atlas of Talairach and Tournoux. Representation in stereotaxic space of regions with significant reduction of volume in schizophrenia was demonstrated. Schizophrenics demonstrated a significant reduction of volumes in the multiple brain areas, such as the limbic and paralimbic systems, neocortical areas and the subcortical regions. *Middle*: The SPM {*t*} is rendered onto T_1-weighted MR images. *Bottom*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed onto axial T_1-weighted MR images. A significantly decreased volume of the amygdala-uncus, bilateral insular cortices, ACC, temporal cortex and the left thalamus in schizophrenics was noted.

In the limbic and paralimbic systems, patients with schizophrenia showed reduction of volumes in the parahippocampal gyri, amygdala-uncus, insular cortices and the anterior cingulate cortices (ACC). They also demonstrated reduced volumes in the frontal and temporal association areas, dorsal premotor areas and the left thalamus. In comparison with controls, patients with schizophrenia showed significantly increased volume in the CSF space such as lateral ventricle, sylvian and the interhemispheric fissures but not in the grey matter (Table 2 and Fig. 4).

Morphological changes associated with the Val158Met polymorphism (genotype effects)

In comparison with Met-COMT carriers, individuals homozygous for the Val-COMT allele demonstrated a significant reduction of volumes in the left ACC and the right middle temporal gyrus (MTG) (Table 2 and Fig. 5). The hypothesis-driven analysis demonstrated a genotype effect on volumes in the bilateral DLPFC (right BA9, left BA8) at a lenient threshold (uncorrected $P = 0.05$) (data are not shown), however, no voxels could survive after the correction for multiple comparisons (FDR < 0.05) within the ROI. There were no areas that individuals homozygous for the Val-COMT allele demonstrated a significant increment of volume compared to Met-COMT carriers.

Genotype—diagnosis interaction effects

We found significant genotype-diagnosis interaction effects on brain morphology. The stronger effects of Val158Met polymorphism on brain morphology in schizophrenia than those in controls were noted in the left ACC and the left amygdala-uncus (Table 2 and Fig. 6). The hypothesis-driven analysis demonstrated a genotype-diagnosis interaction effect on the volume of the right DLPFC (BA9/46) at a lenient threshold (uncorrected $P = 0.05$) (data not shown), however, no voxels could survive after the correction of multiple comparisons (FDR < 0.05) within the ROI.

Effects of the Val58Met polymorphism on brain morphology

Since genotype–disease interaction effects were found, we estimated the effects of genotypes on brain morphology in the control groups and the schizophrenic groups separately.

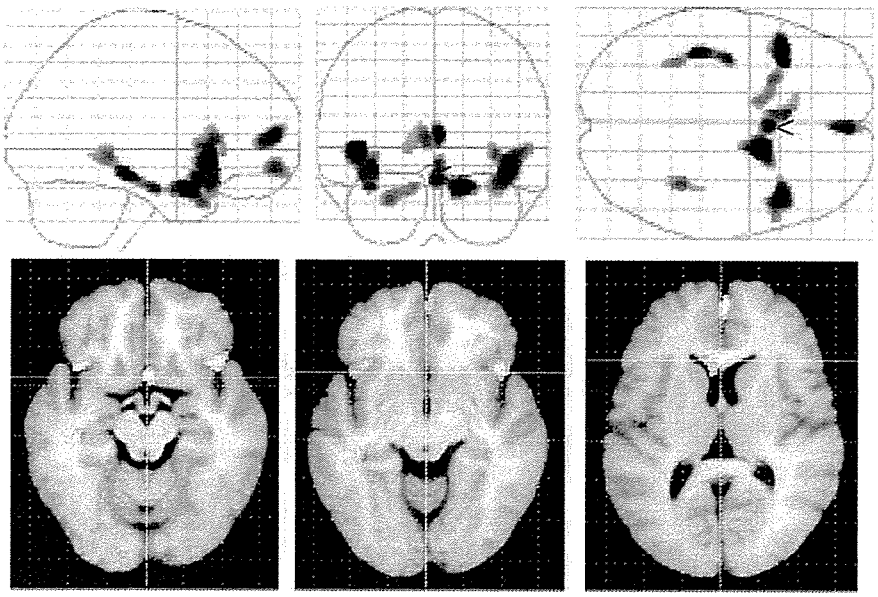

Fig. 4 Increased volumes in schizophrenics as compared to controls. *Top*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed in a standard format as a MIP. Patients with schizophrenia showed a significantly increased volume of the CSF space. *Bottom*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed onto axial T_1-weighted MR images. A significantly increased volume of the CSF space such as the lateral ventricle, sylvian fissures and the interhemisphrenic fissure was noted.

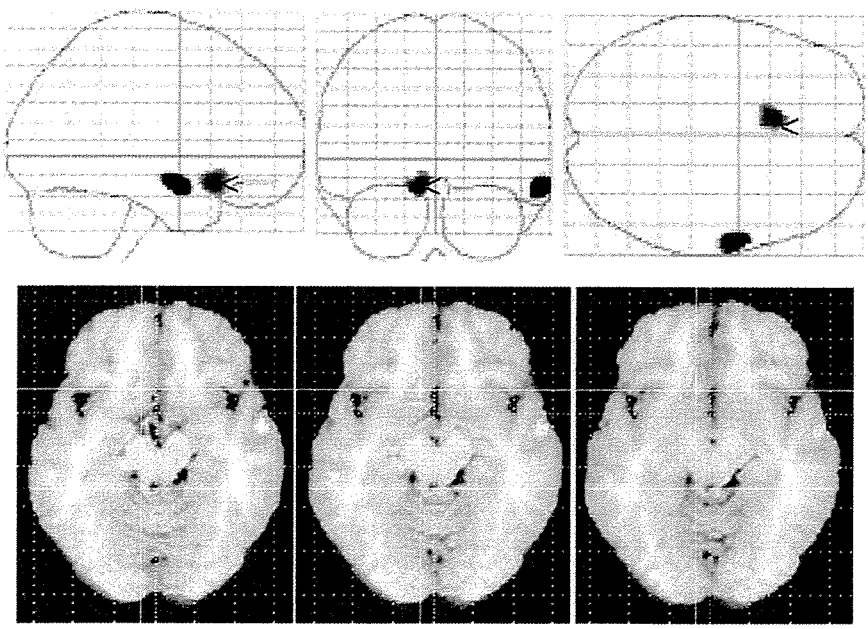

Fig. 5 The result of comparison between individuals homozygous for the Val-COMT allele (n = 57) and Met-COMT carriers (n = 66) (genotype effects). *Top*: Representation in stereotaxic space of regions with significant reduction of volume in individuals homozygous for the Val-COMT allele demonstrated. *Bottom*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed onto axial T_1-weighted MR images. Individuals homozygous for the Val-COMT allele demonstrated a significant reduction of volumes in the left ACC and right MTG as compared to Met-COMT carriers.

In the control group, we found no significant morphological differences between individuals homozygous for the Val-COMT allele and Met-COMT carriers. Even the hypothesis driven analysis with a lenient statistical threshold ($P < 0.05$) could not detect any significant morphological changes in the DLPFC between the two groups. Contrary to the control group, schizophrenics homozygous for the Val-COMT allele showed a significant reduction of volumes in the left amygdala-uncus, bilateral ACC, right MTG and the left thalamus when compared to the patients carrying the Met-COMT

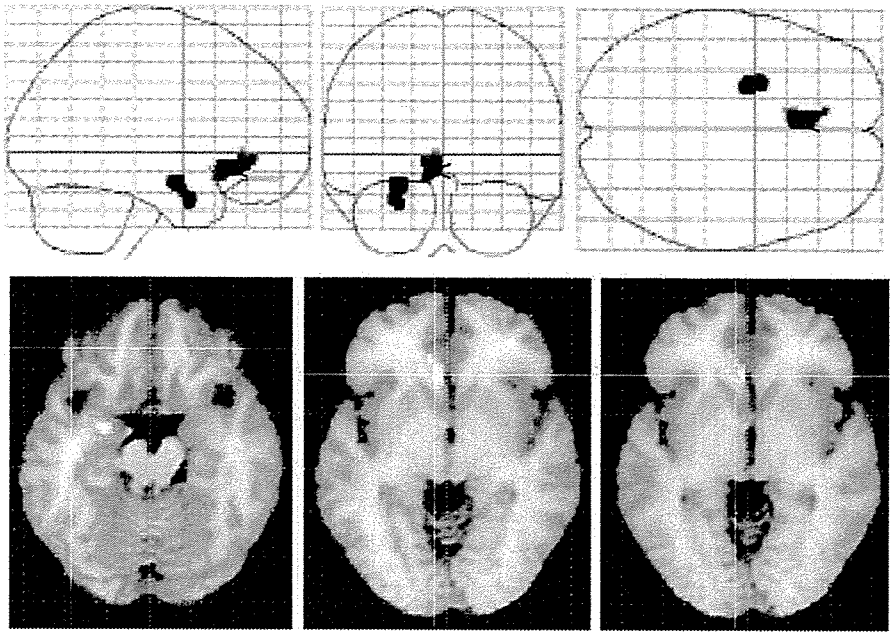

Fig. 6 Results of genotype-diagnosis interaction effects on brain morphology. *Top*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed in a standard format as a MIP. The stronger effects of Val158Met polymorphism on brain morphology in schizophrenia than those in controls were noted in the left ACC, left parahippocampal gyrus and the amygdala-uncus. *Bottom*: The SPM {*t*} is displayed onto axial T_1-weighted MR images.

allele (Table 2, Fig. 7). The hypothesis-driven analysis demonstrated a significantly decreased volume of the bilateral DLPFC in schizophrenics homozygous for the Val-COMT allele when compared to the Met-COMT schizophrenics at a lenient threshold (uncorrected $P = 0.05$) (data not shown). However, no voxels could survive after the correction for multiple comparisons (FDR < 0.05) within the ROI. There are no significantly increased volumes in the schizophrenics homozygous for the Val-COMT allele. All the results were essentially unchanged even if all the left-handed subjects were excluded in all analyses (data not shown).

Discussion

In this study, we found reduction of volumes in the limbic and paralimbic systems, neocortical areas (prefrontal and temporal cortices) and thalamus in patients with schizophrenia when compared to control subjects. The schizophrenia patients demonstrated a significant enlargement of CSF spaces including the lateral and sylvian fissure, which could be interpreted as a result of impaired neurodevelopment and/or global brain atrophy. These findings are concordant with previous studies of MR morphometry of schizophrenia. According to a recent review and meta-analyses of the morphometry of schizophrenia, the consistent abnormalities in schizophrenia are as follows; (i) ventricular enlargement (lateral and third ventricles); (ii) medial temporal lobe involvement; (iii) superior temporal gyrus involvement (iv) parietal lobe involvement; and (v) subcortical brain region involvement including the thalamus (Okubo *et al.*, 2001; Shenton *et al.*, 2001; Davidson and Heinrichs, 2003). The other regions observed in this study, such as the insula, DLPFC and the ACC have also often been demonstrated as abnormal areas in schizophrenia (Shenton *et al.*, 2001; Takahashi *et al.*, 2004; Yamasue *et al.*, 2004). Using the TBM technique, we replicated the morphological abnormalities observed in previous MR studies on schizophrenia, suggesting that TBM was able to detect morphological changes associated with this disease. As well as neuroimaging studies, post-mortem studies have also reported morphological abnormalities in schizophrenia, but not necessarily as common neuropathological features. Regions including the hippocampus, ACC, thalamus and the DLPFC are regularly associated with abnormalities of cell size, cell number and neuronal organization (Bogerts, 1993; Arnold and Trojanowski, 1996; Selemon, 2001; Selemon and Lynn, 2002, 2003). Selemon *et al.* reported that schizophrenics demonstrated abnormalities in overall and laminar neuronal density in the DLPFC (Brodmann area 9) and suggested that the DLPFC should be a particularly vulnerable target in the disease process (Selemon 2001; Selemon and Lynn, 2002, 2003).

Importantly, our results suggest that some of the morphological changes in schizophrenia mentioned above are associated with the Val158Met polymorphism of the COMT gene. In the schizophrenic group, the polymorphism was associated with the volumes in the limbic and paralimbic systems, temporal cortices and the left thalamus, whereas no morphological changes related to the polymorphism were found in

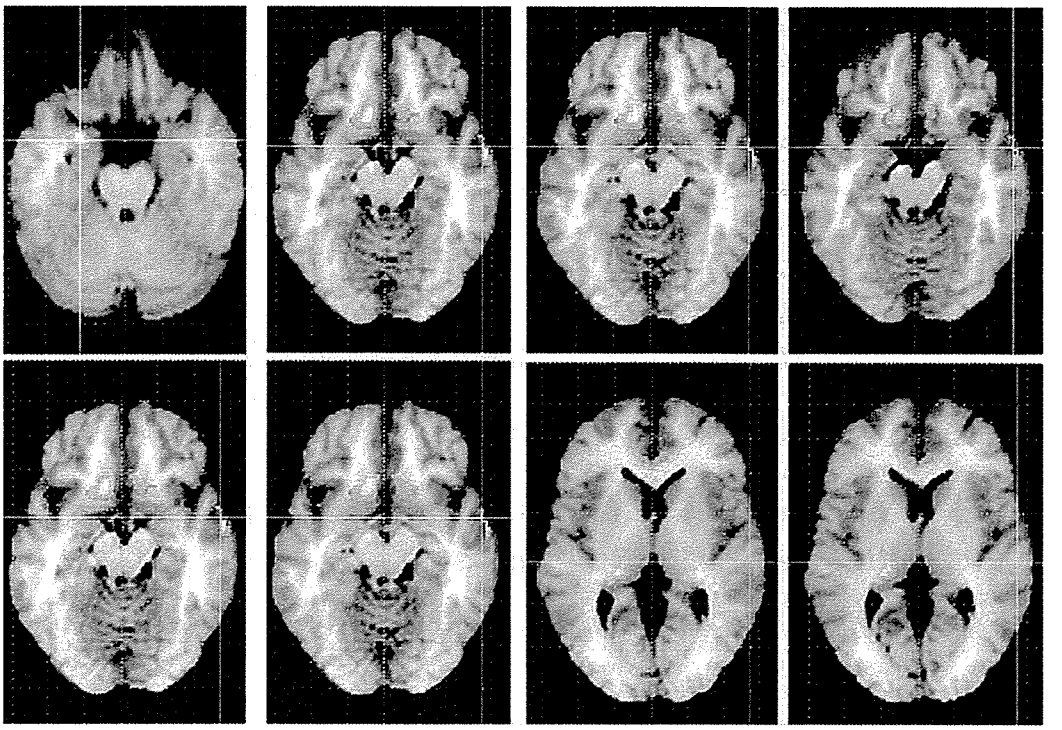

Fig. 7 The effects of the Val158Met polymorphism of the COMT gene on brain morphology in schizophrenics. The SPM {*t*} is displayed onto axial T_1-weighted MR images. The schizophrenics homozygous for the Val-COMT allele (n = 19) showed a significant reduction of volumes in the left parahippocampal gyrus, amygdala-uncus, ACC, left thalamus and the right MTG when compared to patients who carried the Met-COMT allele (n = 28).

normal individuals. As a consequence, significant genotype-diagnosis interaction effects were found in the left ACC and the amygdala-uncus. These results indicate that the Val158-Met polymorphism of the COMT gene is strongly associated with morphological changes in schizophrenia, particularly those in the limbic and paralimbic systems. Longitudinal MRI studies of schizophrenia strongly suggest that progressive changes should occur after onset of the illness (Okubo *et al.*, 2001; Ho *et al.*, 2003). Recent studies have demonstrated that antipsychotic drugs, particularly haloperidol, have considerable effects on brain morphology (Arango *et al.*, 2003; Lieberman, 2005; Dorph *et al.*, 2005). Because of the long duration of illness and medication taken by our subjects, the effects of antipsychotics may be a possible confounding factor for our findings. However, the duration of medication and the dose of antipsychotics taken by the Val/Val-COMT schizophrenics did not differ from those of the Met-COMT schizophrenics. Although the effects of antipsychotics on brain morphology may contribute to the observed morphological changes in patients with schizophrenia in this study, it is unlikely that the effects of antipsychotics contributed to morphological differences between the two schizophrenic groups.

When we were preparing this manuscript, another study demonstrated no genotype and genotype-diagnosis interaction effects of the Val158Met polymorphism on morphology of the frontal lobe in controls and schizophrenia (Ho *et al.*, 2005). Although there are differences between the two studies, such as mean ages of subjects, duration of illness, methods for image analysis and a racial factor (Caucasians versus Japanese), that study also demonstrated no genotype and genotype-diagnosis interaction effects on morphology of the DLPFC. However, we found these effects on DLPFC morphology at a very lenient statistical threshold. Further studies with a larger sample will clarify whether Val158Met polymorphism does affect DLPFC morphology. As well as prefrontal morphology, we found no significant genotype or genotype-diagnosis interaction effects on working memory, however, schizophrenics homozygous for the Val-COMT allele tended to have poorer performances on working memory measures, compared to Met-COMT carriers with schizophrenia. Although there were no significant effects of Val158Met polymorphism on working memory and other neuropsychological measures, a significant effect of the polymorphism was noted in brain morphology. The brain morphology has been considered to be useful as an intermediate phenotype in genetic research in neuropsychiatric disorders (Baare *et al.*, 2001; Durston *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, morphological changes might be more sensitive to the effects of genotype than behavioural measures such as the performance of working memory measures. In a previous study (Ho *et al.*, 2005) a similar phenomenon—no significant effect of Val158Met polymorphism on working memory performance but significant

effects on brain activities during a working memory task—was found. Further studies with a larger sample size are needed to clarify whether morphological changes are a more sensitive marker of genotype effects than behavioural measures.

Unexpectedly, we found effects of the polymorphism on the ACC volume rather than the DLPFC which is crucial for working memory. Since the ACC is associated with a variety of cognitive tasks involving mental efforts, and also plays important roles in working memory (Paus *et al.*, 2001; Kondo *et al.*, 2004), it is feasible that the Val158Met polymorphism may be associated with the ACC morphology. In fact, a previous study demonstrated that the Val-COMT allele was associated with abnormal ACC function as well as abnormal prefrontal cortical function, relative to the Met-COMT allele, as measured by cognitive tests and fMRI activation in normal subjects (Egan *et al.*, 2001).

One would argue that the effects of one polymorphism of the gene could not explain the morphological changes in schizophrenia. As well as the effects of the Val158Met polymorphism, we agree that other polymorphisms of schizophrenia susceptibility genes and genotype–genotype interaction may relate to individual brain morphology. Such interactions might contribute to the different effects of the Val158Met polymorphism on brain morphology observed in this study. Further studies of each effect and interaction of several schizophrenia susceptibility genes on brain morphology, brain functions and performances of neuropsychological tests should be conducted to clarify how polymorphisms of these genes affect intermediate phenotypes of schizophrenia.

In conclusion, we found an association between the Val158Met polymorphism and morphological abnormalities in schizophrenia. Although the underlying mechanisms of our observation remain to be clarified, our data indicate that brain morphology as an intermediate phenotype should be useful for investigating how genotypes affect endophenotypes of schizophrenia.

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Progressive changes of white matter integrity in schizophrenia revealed by diffusion tensor imaging

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Abstract

Recent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) studies using diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) have suggested reduced fractional anisotropy (FA) in the white matter (WM) of the brain in patients with schizophrenia. We tried to examine whether such reduction in FA exists and whether such changes in FA progress in an age-dependent manner in a Japanese sample of chronic schizophrenia. FA values were compared between 42 patients with chronic schizophrenia and 42 controls matched for age and gender, by using DTI with voxel-by-voxel and region-of-interest analyses. Correlations of FA values with age and duration of illness were examined. Patients with schizophrenia showed lower FA values, compared to controls, in the widespread WM areas including the uncinate fasciculi and cingulum bundles. A significant group-by-age interaction was found for FA in the WM, i.e., age-related reduction of FA was more pronounced in schizophrenics than in controls. A significant negative correlation between FA and duration of illness was also found in the WM. Our data confirmed decreased FA in schizophrenics, compared to controls in the widespread WM areas. Such decreased FA values in schizophrenia might be attributable, at least in part, to progressive changes after the onset of the illness.

Keywords: Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI); DTI; Fractional anisotropy (FA); Aging

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1. Introduction

Diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) (Basser et al., 1994), a newly developed method to estimate the white matter (WM) integrity, provides information about the diffusion of water in biological tissues. In the WM, water diffusion is highly anisotropic, with greater diffusion in the direction parallel to axonal tracts. Thus, diminished anisotropy of water diffusion has been proposed to reflect compromised WM integrity (Lim et al., 1999). Fractional anisotropy (FA) (Basser, 1995) is a quantitative measure of diffusion anisotropy acquired from DTI.

The normally aging brain exhibits an assortment of micro- and macroscopic changes in the WM as well as the cerebral cortex. Histological studies demonstrate a decrease in myelin density and in the number of myelinated fibers (Meier-Ruge et al., 1992). Postmortem brain (Meier-Ruge et al., 1992) and volumetric neuroimaging studies (Christiansen et al., 1994; Salat et al., 1999) have suggested that WM changes are more prominent than cortical changes with aging, at least during certain segments of the age span and in certain regions of the brain. For example, volume loss in prefrontal WM is disproportionately greater than that in prefrontal cortex with late aging {comparison of elderly adults aged 60–75 with those aged >85 years (Salat et al., 1999)}. Several DTI studies have demonstrated age-related reductions of WM anisotropy in the genu of the corpus callosum (Pfefferbaum et al., 2000b), anterior WM (Pfefferbaum et al., 2000a; O'Sullivan et al., 2001), periventricular WM (Nusbaum et al., 2001), and the prefrontal WM (Nusbaum et al., 2001; Pfefferbaum et al., 2005; Salat et al., 2005).

Regarding schizophrenia, impairments of the neural connectivity between certain cortical areas, such as frontal and temporal areas, have been implicated in the pathophysiology of the disease (Frith and Dolan, 1996; Andreasen et al., 1997; Bullmore et al., 1997). Indeed, volumetric magnetic resonance (MR) studies and pathological studies demonstrated abnormalities of the WM in schizophrenia (Miyakawa et al., 1972; Cannon et al., 1998; Davis et al., 2003; Ho et al., 2003; Uranova et al., 2004). Changes in WM integrity in schizophrenia has relevance to the neural disconnection model of the disorder and may provide a basis for focal abnormalities as well. Several previous DTI studies in chronic schizophrenia showed decrease of FA in schizophrenics mainly in the front-temporal white matter and corpus callosum (Buchsbaum et al., 1998; Lim et al., 1999; Agartz et al., 2001; Burns et al., 2003). Furthermore, FA decrease in patients with first episode schizophrenia might be less pronounced compared to chronic patients (Price et al., 2005; Szeszko et al., 2005), suggesting that the decreased FA in schizophrenics might be attributed, at least in part, to progressive and exaggerated age-dependent changes in schizophrenics rather than neurodevelopmental abnormalities in the WM. To date, there is only one cross-sectional study with a small sample size investigating age-related FA changes in schizophrenia that demonstrated an age-related FA increase in schizophrenics (Jones et al., 2006).

The present study was aimed to examine whether patients with chronic schizophrenia do have reduced FA values compared to controls and whether such changes in FA progress in an age-dependent manner.

2. Methods

2.1. Subjects

Table 1 shows the characteristics of participants of this study. Forty-two patients with chronic schizophrenia were recruited at the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry, Tokyo, Japan. Consensus diagnosis was made for each patient by at least two trained psychiatrists according to the DSM-IV criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), based on all available information, including clinical interviews, medical records and other research assessments. All patients were stable and/or partially remitted and had been taking antipsychotic medication at the time of MR measurement and neuropsychological tests. Forty-two healthy volunteers who had no current or past contact to any psychiatric services served as controls. All the subjects were biologically unrelated Japanese. After description of the study, written informed consent was obtained from every subject. The study protocol was approved by the ethics committee of the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry, Tokyo, Japan. Exclusion criteria for all the participants included asymptomatic or symptomatic cerebral infarctions detected by T2 weighted MRI, serious neurological or endocrine disorder, any medical condition that could potentially affect the central nervous system, or mental retardation according to DSM-IV criteria.

2.2. Image acquisition

MR studies were performed on a 1.5 tesla Magnetom Vision Plus system (Siemens, Erlangen, Germany). Axial DTI scans aligned to the plane containing anterior and posterior commissures were acquired with a pulsed-

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Table 1
Characteristics of participants

	Controls	Schizophrenics	Two sample *t*-test	(Two-tailed; df=82)
			t	*P*
Number of subjects	42	42		
Gender (male/female)	26/16	26/16		
Handedness (right/left)	41/1	41/1		
Age (years)	39.2 (9.0)	40.0 (9.3)	−0.42	0.68
Range of age (years)	22–59	22–59		
Education (years)	17.1 (3.5)	13.0 (2.9)	8.1	<0.001
Full-scale IQ (WAIS-R)	114.3 (11.6)	86.0 (21.3)	6.0	<0.001
Age of onset		23.3 (7.0)		
Duration of illness (years)		16.8 (9.0)		
Duration of hospitalization (months)		31.2 (61.3)		
Dose of total antipsychotic drugs (mg/day, chlorpromazine equivalent)		1005.1 (735.3)		
Dose of typical antipsychotic drugs (mg/day, chlorpromazine equivalent)		694.8 (748.3)		
Dose of atypical antipsychotic drugs (mg/day, chlorpromazine equivalent)		310.3 (464.2)		

Mean (S.D.).
WAIS-R: Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised.

gradient, spin-echo, single-shot echo planar imaging (EPI) sequence (TR/TE=4000/100 ms; acquisition matrix, 256×256; NEX=4, FOV 240 mm; b=1000 s/mm^2; 20 slices, slice thickness 5 mm, gap 1.5 mm). Diffusion was measured along six non-collinear directions. For each of six gradient directions, four acquisitions were averaged. Four acquisitions without diffusion weighting (b=0) were also averaged. Additionally, a three dimensional volumetric acquisition of a T1-weighted gradient echo sequence with a gapless series of thin sagittal sections using an MPRage sequence (TR/TE=11.4/4.4 ms; flip angle, 15 degree; acquisition matrix, 256×256; NEX=1, FOV 315 mm; slice thickness 1.23 mm) was acquired for evaluating the volume of grey matter (GM), WM and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) space.

2.3. Image processing

FA images for each subject were computed from seven diffusion images acquired as above by an in-house script on Matlab 6.5 software (Mathworks, Inc., MA, USA). Then, the FA images were spatially-normalized using high-dimensional-warping algorithm (Ashburner et al., 1999) and were matched to the FA template image. To make the FA template image, we warped FA images of 4 normal subjects (other than 42 control subjects) to the single-subject T1 template (skull stripped image) using spatial normalization function of SPM2 and averaged the 4 warped FA images. The transformed FA images were smoothed with a Gaussian kernel. The filter size (full-width at half-maximum: FWHM) was varied from zero to 16 mm in steps of 2 mm to validate the consistency of results of SPM analyses, because a previous study (Jones et al., 2005) reported that the statistical results of SPM analyses were differed depending on filter size. For measuring the volume of GM, WM and CSF space, an additional function of an optimized VBM script (http://dbm.neuro.uni-jena.de/vbm) was used (Good et al., 2001).

2.4. Statistical analysis

2.4.1. Voxel-by-voxel analysis

The resultant FA images were analyzed using statistical parametric mapping with the framework of the General Linear Model in SPM2 (Wellcome Department of Cognitive Neurology, London, UK) (Friston et al., 1995). We constituted following three

Table 2
The relationship between smoothing kernel sizes (FWHM) and number of resels in our sample

FWHM (mm)	Number of resels
None	12460.4
2×2×2	5131.1
4×4×4	1720.2
6×6×6	706.0
8×8×8	289.4
10×10×10	119.7
12×12×12	52.1
14×14×14	24.4
16×16×16	12.4

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statistical analyses: 1) a two-sample *t*-test for estimating group differences (controls versus schizophrenics), 2) a correlational analysis between age and FA values in both controls and the schizophrenics and 3) a correlational analysis of FA values with duration of illness, age of onset, duration of hospitalization, and daily dose of

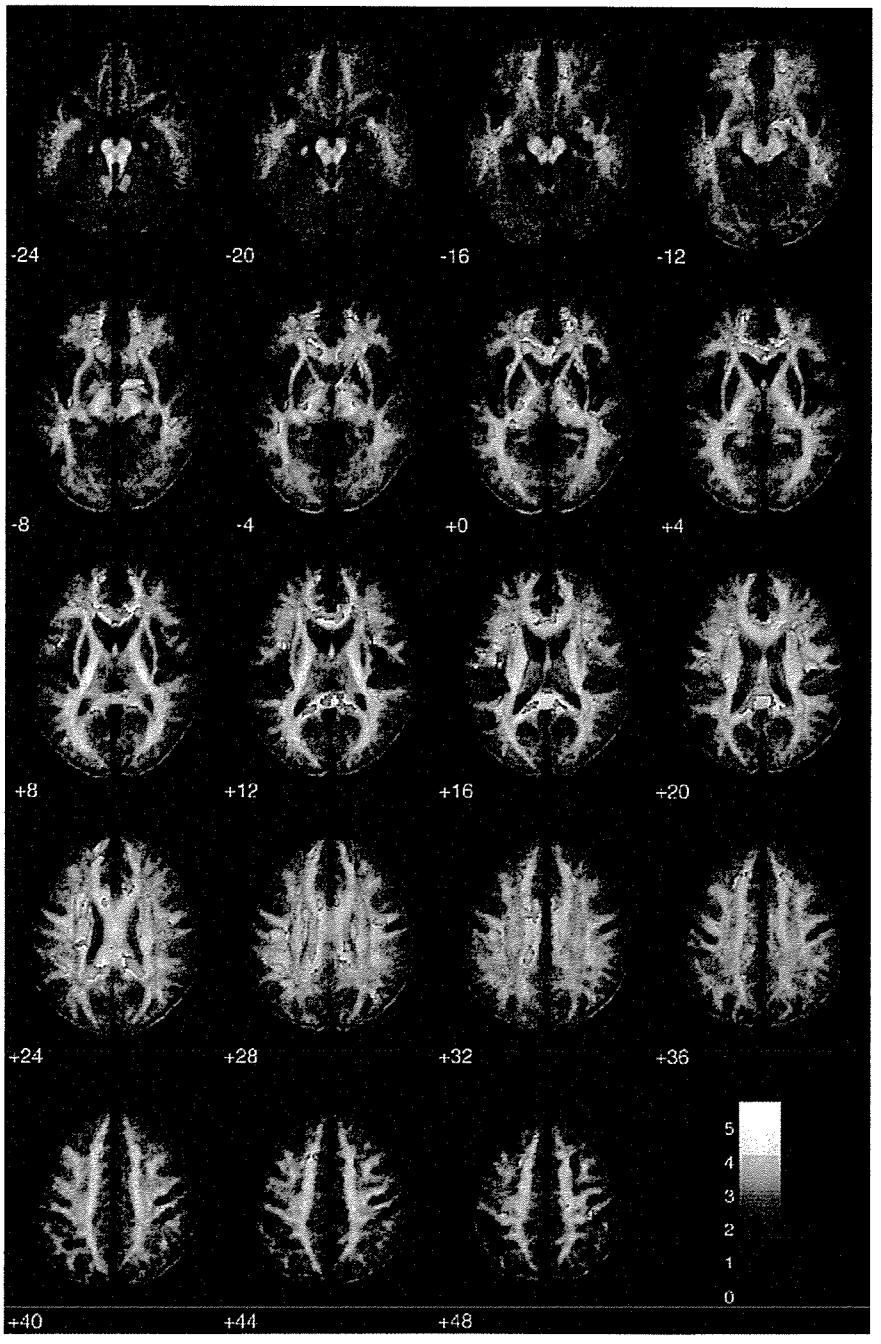

Fig. 1. Comparison in FA values between patients with schizophrenia and controls. The SPM {t} is displayed onto axial FA template images. The WM areas in which significantly lower FA values in patients compared with controls were observed, including the bilateral frontal and temporal WM, uncinate fasciculi, cingulum bundles, and genu and splenium of the corpus callosum ($P<0.001$, uncorrected).

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antipsychotic drugs in the schizophrenics. In all the three analyses, relative WM volume (WM volume divided by the summation of GM, WM and CSF volumes) and WAIS-R (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised) full-scale IQ score were treated as nuisance variables. The former was included for eliminating the possible effect of WM volume change associated with aging on the FA values through partial voluming from non-WM voxels. The latter was included to allow for the effects of IQ, because there was some evidence which suggested DTI measures were correlated with cognitive decline in elderly (O'Sullivan et al., 2004). We additionally conducted the analyses without these two nuisance variables to check whether there were any differences in the results with or without nuisance variables in the statistical models. To estimate population effects (diagnostic effects), we used a single-subject, condition (controls or schizophrenics) and covariate (no covariate of interest) model for the SPM analysis. In the second analysis, we applied the single subject condition (controls or schizophrenics) and covariate (interaction with condition, covariate of interest; age) model. A single-subject, covariate only model was applied in the third analysis. For these three analyses, we set masking threshold for FA values of 0.2 for excluding voxels containing partial volume of WM and other tissues. Since the previous study demonstrating a positive correlation between FA values and age in schizophrenics reported mean FA values of around 0.4 (Jones et al., 2006), we additionally set masking threshold for FA values of 0.35 for examining correlation between age and FA values of more anisotropic WM structure in the second analysis. For the evaluation of the statistical models, we used Wake Forest University Pickatlas (Maldjian et al., 2003) to pick up cerebral WM in the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI) space. We used uncorrected $P<0.001$ as a statistical threshold to search significant differences. As demonstrated in Table 2, the number of resels differed profoundly depending on smoothing kernel sizes (FWHM) and the statistical results with correction for multiple comparisons could change dramatically relying on number of resels. On the other hand, SPM results without correction for multiple comparisons were essentially unchanged regardless of smoothing kernel size (data not shown). Therefore, we did not perform correction for multiple comparisons. The resultant set of t values constituted statistical parametric map (SPM {t}). We employed the filter size of 6 mm for presentation of the results considering for the original voxel dimensions of acquired data {0.94 mm × 0.94 mm × (5.00+1.50) mm}.

2.4.2. ROI analysis

To ensure the robustness of the results of the voxel-by-voxel analyses, we additionally performed ROI analyses. We used MarsBar (http://marsbar.sourceforge.net/) for extracting region of interest (ROI) containing all the voxels classified as WM with Wake Forest University Pickatlas from spatially normalized and smoothed FA images and calculated mean FA values of the ROI. Then, we performed correlational analyses of mean FA values with the same variables in voxel-by-voxel analysis using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), 1) in both controls and schizophrenics, 2) in controls and 3) in schizophrenics. We constituted a General Linear Model for the first analysis and entered diagnosis-by-age interaction effects into the statistical model to examine if there were any diagnosis-by-age interaction effects. For the second and third analyses, Pearson's correlation coefficients between mean WM FA values and covariates were calculated.

3. Results

3.1. Voxel-by-voxel analyses

3.1.1. Comparison between schizophrenics and controls

Schizophrenics demonstrated significantly lower FA values in widespread WM areas, compared with controls. These WM areas included bilateral frontal and temporal lobes, uncinate fasciculi (external capsules), cingulum bundles, and genu and splenium of corpus

Table 3
The summary of the WM areas in which significantly lower FA values in patients compared with controls were observed

Anatomical regions	t-value	MNI coordinates		
	(Voxel level)	x	y	z
Rt frontal lobe white matter	4.34	22.5	52.5	−4.5
Lt frontal lobe white matter	5.43	−13.5	49.5	−6
Rt temporal lobe white matter	4.25	48	−33	−7.5
Lt temporal lobe white matter	4.19	−45	−31.5	−10.5
Rt uncinate fasciculus (external capsule)	4.00	33	12	−1.5
Lt uncinate fasciculus (external capsule)	3.84	−33	12	−1.5
Rt cingulate bundle	4.23	6	6	33
Lt cingulate bundle	4.32	−7.5	6	30
genu of corpus callosum	3.79	6	24	10.5
splenium of corpus callosum	4.18	−3	−33	19.5

callosum (Fig. 1, Table 3). There would be increased possibility of alpha errors because we did not perform correction for multiple comparisons. However, our results were in well concordance with the results of the previous studies (Buchsbaum et al., 1998; Lim et al., 1999; Agartz et al., 2001; Burns et al., 2003; Kubicki

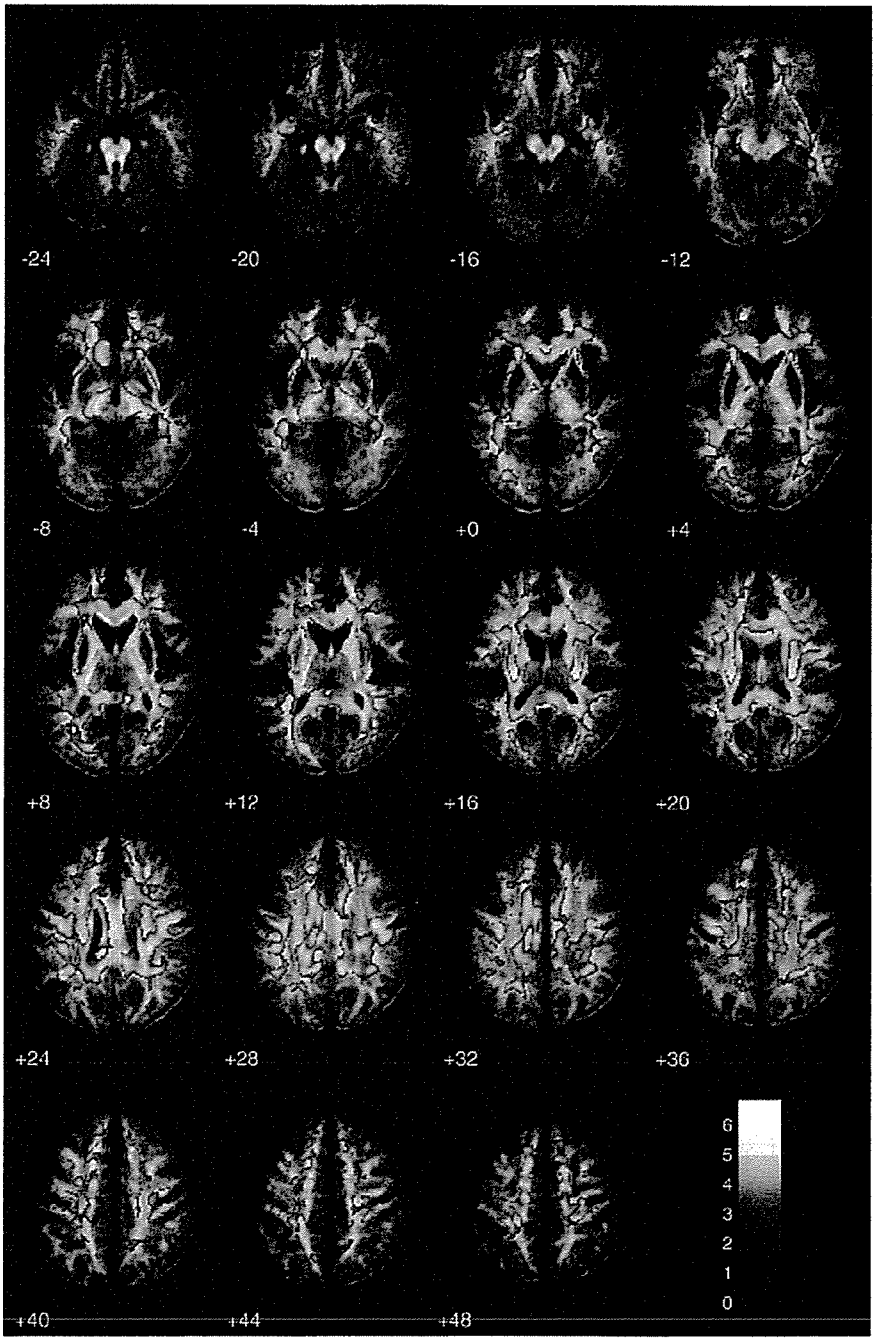

Fig. 2. Correlational analysis between FA values and age with 0.2 as a masking threshold in schizophrenics. The SPM {*t*} is displayed onto axial FA template images. The widespread WM areas showed a significant negative correlation between FA values and age in schizophrenics ($P<0.001$, uncorrected).

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et al., 2003). Therefore, we might be able to regard the results of these previous studies as a priori hypotheses. There were no areas of significantly higher FA values in patients compared with controls even at a lenient threshold ($P<0.05$, uncorrected). In these results of the analysis without nuisance variables in the statistical

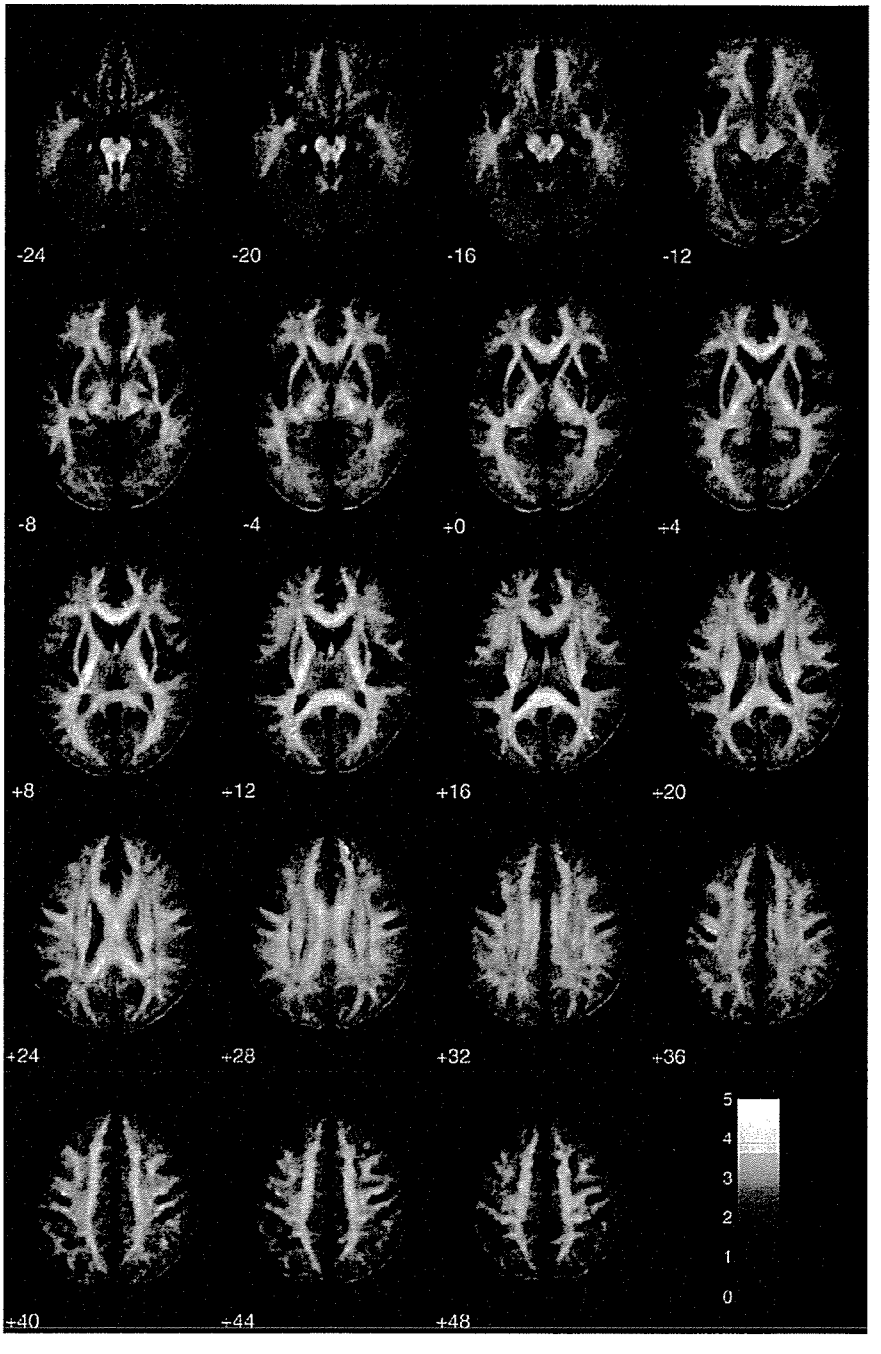

Fig. 3. Correlational analysis between FA values and age with 0.2 as a masking threshold in controls. The SPM {t} is displayed onto axial FA template images. The WM areas showed a significant negative correlation between FA values and age in controls ($P<0.001$, uncorrected), including right prefrontal {(15.0, 49.5, 30.0) in MNI coordinates, $t=5.03$}, left frontal {(−37.5, −15.0, 34.5), $t=4.51$} and bilateral temporo-occipital WM {(31.5, −60.0, 16.5), $t=4.75$; (−30.0, −60.0, 15.0), $t=4.47$}.

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models, the distributions of the statistically significant areas were essentially unchanged compared to the results with nuisance variables although the spatial extents of the statistically significant areas were slightly larger (data not shown), which was the case with the results of other two analyses.

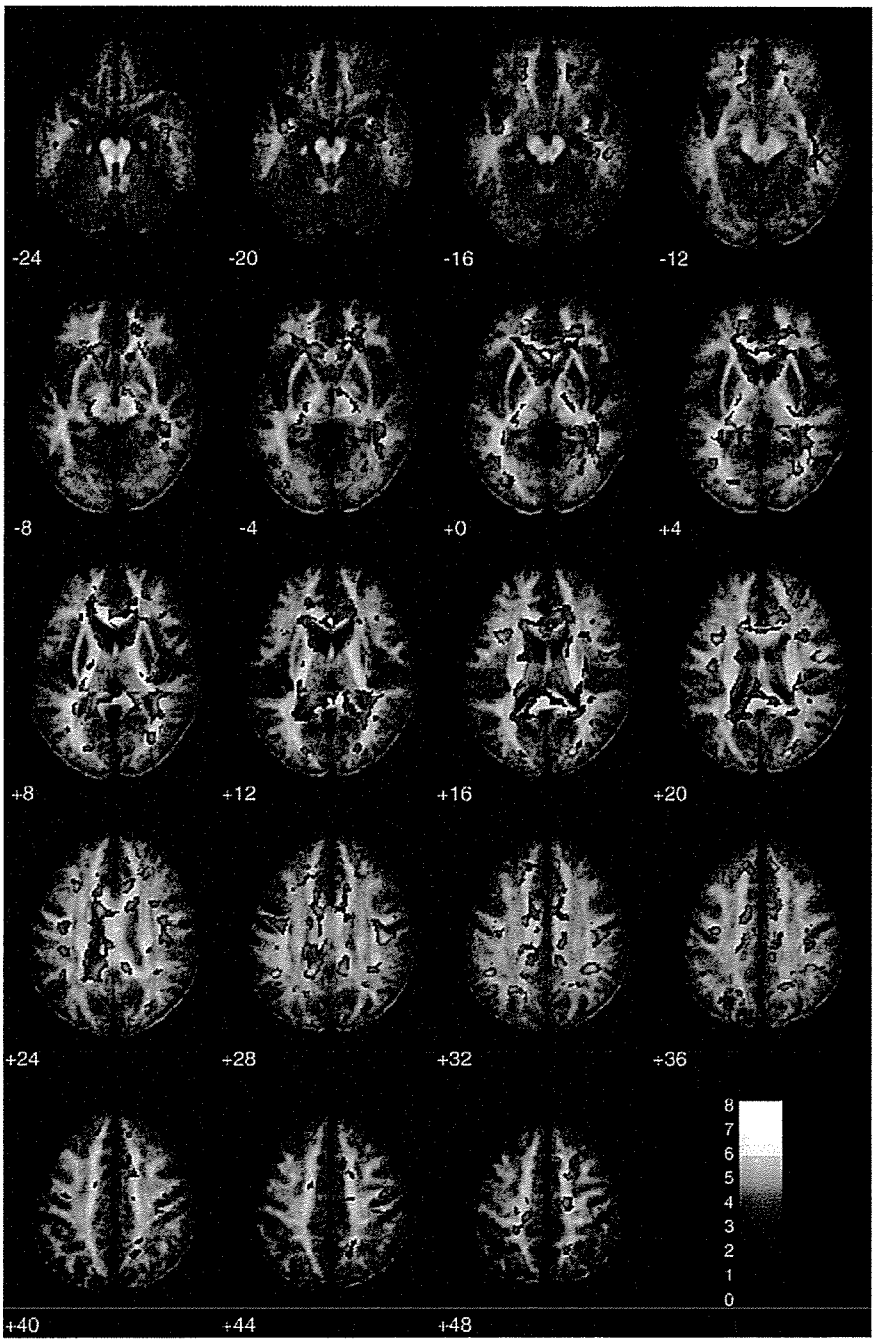

Fig. 4. Correlational analysis between FA values and duration of illness with 0.2 as a masking threshold in schizophrenics. The SPM {t} is displayed onto axial FA template images. The widespread WM areas showed a significant negative correlation between FA values and duration of illness in schizophrenics ($P<0.001$, uncorrected).

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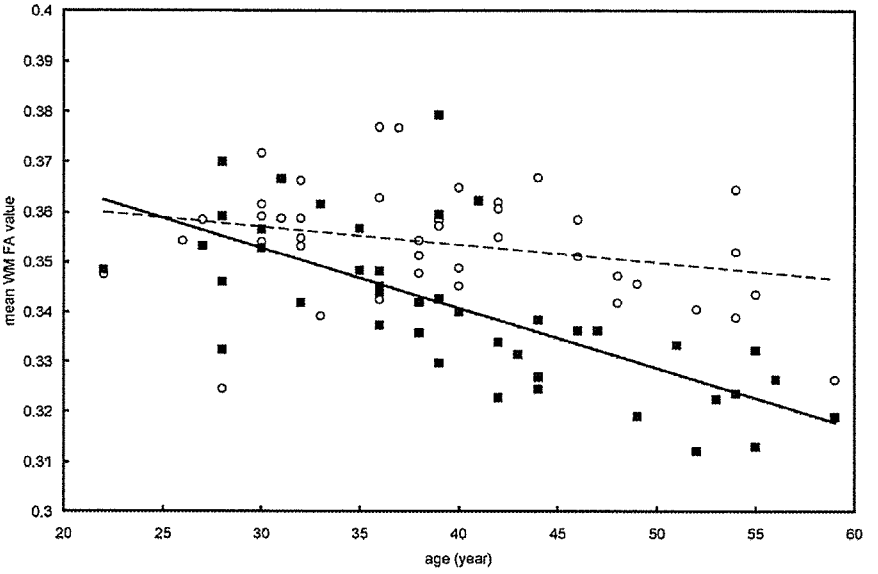

Fig. 5. A scatter plot between age and mean WM FA value when masking threshold for FA values was set to 0.2. Filled squares represent schizophrenics and open circles represent controls. The solid line indicates a regression line for schizophrenics ($y=-0.0012\times+0.3888$, $R^2=0.49$, test for regression slope: df=40; $t=-6.24$; $P<0.0001$). The dashed line indicates a regression line for controls ($y=-0.0004\times+0.3679$, $R^2=0.083$, test f or regression slope: df=40; $t=-1.90$; $P=0.065$). A significant diagnosis-by-age interaction effect (general linear model: $P=0.009$) was noted.

3.1.2. *Correlational analysis in schizophrenic and control groups*

As the results of the second analysis considering aging effects, a significant negative correlation with age was observed in the FA values of widespread, almost diffuse WM areas in the schizophrenic group (Fig. 2), while in the control group, only FA values in right prefrontal {(15.0, 49.5, 30.0) in MNI coordinates, $t=5.03$}, left frontal {(−37.5, −15.0, 34.5), $t=4.51$} and bilateral temporo-occipital WM {(31.5, −60.0, 16.5), $t=4.75$;

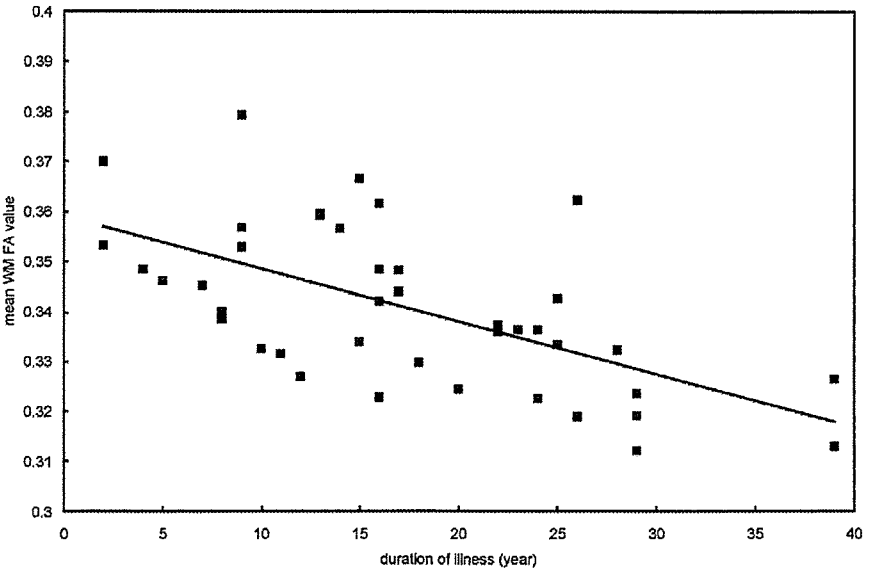

Fig. 6. A scatter plot between duration of illness and mean WM FA value when masking threshold for FA values was set to 0.2. Filled squares represent schizophrenics. The solid line indicates a regression line for schizophrenics ($y=-0.0011\times+0.3590$, $R^2=0.36$, test for regression slope: df=40; $t=-4.78$; $P<0.0001$).

(−30.0, −60.0, 15.0), t=4.47} demonstrated a significant negative correlation with age (Fig. 3). Even if the analysis was done on voxels with FA values higher than 0.35, to examine more anisotropic WM areas, the results were essentially unchanged (data not shown).

3.1.3. Correlational analysis between FA values and clinical factors in schizophrenics

There was a significant negative correlation between FA values and duration of illness in widespread WM areas (Fig. 4), while there was no significant correlation of FA values with age of onset, duration of hospitalization or daily dose of antipsychotic drugs (data not shown).

3.2. ROI analyses

3.2.1. ROI-based correlational analysis in both schizophrenics and controls

First, we constituted a General Linear Model putting diagnosis as a fixed factor and age, IQ and relative WM volume as covariates. F values (significance probabilities) were as follows; diagnosis: 10.8 (P=0.001), age: 26.1 (P<0.001), IQ: 0.029 (P=0.865) and relative WM volume: 16.6 (P<0.001). Then, we added diagnosis-by-age interaction into the model. F values (significance probabilities) changed as follows; diagnosis: 2.34 (P=0.130), age: 27.8 (P<0.001), IQ: 0.059 (P=0.809), relative WM volume: 14.1(P<0.001) and diagnosis-by-age interaction: 7.08 (P=0.009). Effect of IQ was not significant in both models. There was a significant diagnosis-by-age interaction effect.

3.2.2. ROI-based correlational analysis in controls

Pearson's correlation coefficients (significance probabilities of the test of significance of the correlation: two-tailed) of mean WM FA value with age, IQ and relative WM volume in controls were as follows; FA vs. age: −0.287 (P=0.065), FA vs. IQ: −0.108 (P=0.496) and FA vs. mean WM volume: 0.481 (P=0.001). Only positive correlation between mean WM FA value and relative WM volume was statistically significant.

3.2.3. ROI-based correlational analysis in schizophrenics

Pearson's correlation coefficients (significance probabilities of the test of significance of the correlation: two-tailed) of mean WM FA value with clinical factors in schizophrenics were as follows; FA vs. age: −0.702 (P< 0.001), FA vs. duration of illness: −0.603 (P<0.001), FA vs. age of onset: −0.305 (P=0.049), FA vs. total daily dose of antipsychotics: 0.110 (P=0.489), FA vs. duration of hospitalization: −0.172 (P=0.277), FA vs. IQ: −0.064 (P=0.686), FA vs. relative WM volume: 0.421 (P=0.006). Significant positive correlation was observed between mean WM FA value and relative WM volume. Fig. 5 shows a scatter plot between age and mean WM FA value in controls and schizophrenics. Fig. 6 shows a scatter plot between duration of illness and mean WM FA value in schizophrenics. Significant negative correlations were observed between mean WM FA value and age (or duration of illness).

4. Discussion

In this study, we obtained three main findings; 1) lower FA values in schizophrenic patients compared with controls in WM areas including frontal and temporal WM, bilateral uncinate fasciculi (external capsules) and cingulum bundles and genu and splenium of corpus callosum, 2) age-related reductions of FA value in the widespread WM were more prominent in schizophrenics than in controls, and 3) a negative correlation between FA value in the widespread WM and duration of illness in schizophrenics.

Recent studies demonstrated age-related FA decline in normal individuals occurred in the prefrontal WM, while temporal WM were relatively preserved (Pfefferbaum et al., 2005; Salat et al., 2005). However, in this study, negative age-dependent effects were observed only in the lenient statistical threshold in the FA values of restricted areas of the WM in controls. This could be explained by the fact that all our subjects were under the age of 60, relatively less old compared to the participants of normal aging studies.

We replicated the results of the most of the previous studies, decreased FA values in the WM of schizophrenics. In the earlier studies concerning FA values in WM of patients with schizophrenia, an inherent abnormality in WM was expected to be detected since the decrease of FA values in the WM of the schizophrenic brain was assumed to occur as neurodevelopmental impairments before onset of the illness. Several studies demonstrated that schizophrenics had reduced FA value in the prefrontal WM (Buchsbaum et al., 1998), prefrontal and parieto-occipital WM (Lim et al., 1999), splenium of the corpus callosum (Agartz et al., 2001) and adjacent occipital WM (forceps major) (Agartz et al., 2001), left uncinate fasciculus and bilateral arcuate fasciculus (Burns et al., 2003), bilateral cingulum bundles (Kubicki et al., 2003). Some of them indicated that the reduction of FA values in schizophrenics might occur independently of reduction of the white matter volume. Although some studies reported no significant FA changes in schizophrenics (Steel et al., 2001; Foong et al., 2002), most studies with chronic

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schizophrenia demonstrated lower FA values in schizophrenia (Kanaan et al., 2005). A few DTI studies have examined first episode patients (Price et al., 2005; Szeszko et al., 2005). Szeszko et al. found FA decrease in the left internal capsule and left-hemisphere WM of the middle frontal gyrus and posterior superior temporal gyrus of first-episode schizophrenics and schizoaffective disorder patients, however, the decrease was less pronounced compared with results of the majority of the studies in chronic schizophrenics. On the other hand, Price et al. reported that there was no FA decrease in the corpus callosum of patients with first-episode schizophrenia. They suggested that FA reduction in schizophrenia might reflect neuropathological abnormalities, which may occur after the onset of the disease and could be progressive. Our results, 1) age related FA reduction was more prominent in schizophrenics than controls, and 2) duration of illness was related to FA reduction in schizophrenics, suggest that changes of FA value in schizophrenia are attributable, at least in part, to progressive neuropathological changes after onset of the illness.

Contrary to our results, a previous DTI study demonstrated 'positive' correlation between age and FA in schizophrenics (Jones et al., 2006). They measured FA values of WM tracts captured from tractography, and they set seedpoints of the tracts manually from one slice of FA images. Such methods might overlook general decline of FA values in the WM. Their mean FA values (average of 8 WM tracts in each subjects) were around 0.4, which was relatively higher than those of our study {our mean FA value of entire WM was 0.35+0.01 (mean+S.D.)}. To simulate the analysis of the previous study, we additionally performed an analysis setting masking threshold for FA values of 0.35. As a result, the significant negative correlation remained to be present even in more anisotropic WM areas.

Previous pathological studies demonstrated microscopic abnormalities of the WM in schizophrenia such as decreased expression of myelin and oligodendrocyte-related genes, the decrease in density of oligodendrocytes (Hof et al., 2002), damage of myelin sheath lamellae (Uranova et al., 2001) and maldistribution of interstitial neurons (Akbarian et al., 1996) in prefrontal WM of the brains of schizophrenic patients. Further, a previous longitudinal MR study demonstrated progressive atrophy of the white matter in schizophrenics (Ho et al., 2003). Given these previous findings and ours, it seems likely that age-dependent FA decrease, but not increase, occurs in schizophrenic brains.

As well as a negative correlation with age, FA values of schizophrenics showed negative correlation with duration of illness but not with age of onset or daily dose of antipsychotics. The facts seem to support the hypothesis that FA reduction in schizophrenia might be associated with neuropathological abnormalities which may emerge, at least in part, after the onset of the disease and could be progressive. Further, the spatial distribution of age-related FA reduction in schizophrenics was different from those of normal individuals in previous studies that demonstrated preserved temporal white matter (Pfefferbaum et al., 2005; Salat et al., 2005). Such different distributions suggest that FA changes in schizophrenics might be associated with disease progression rather than merely exaggerated aging effects. However, it is difficult for neuroimaging studies, even for longitudinal studies, to discriminate disease progression from aging effects. The correlational study between DTI findings and pathological findings should be conducted to clarify whether reduction of FA values in schizophrenics reflect pure disease progression or merely exaggerated aging effects.

Several limitations should be considered in our study. First, our study is a cross-sectional study. To confirm progressive pathological process in the WM of the patients of schizophrenia, longitudinal studies should be conducted. Second, IQ score was not matched between groups, i.e., mean IQ score was significantly lower in schizophrenics in our samples. O'Sullivan et al. (2004) reported DTI measures were correlated strongly with cognitive decline in elderly. Thus, it could be problematic whether age-related FA decrease in our study was reflected by cognitive decline. However, no significant correlation was observed between mean WM FA values and IQ in our sample. Also, regarding schizophrenia, it has been hypothesized that most cognitive change takes place early in their psychotic episodes and it remains relatively stable through long term in the illness (Hoff et al., 2005). Hence, at least from our data, we cannot attribute age-related FA decline in schizophrenia to IQ changes. Third, the issue of partial volume effect should be addressed. In schizophrenia, progressive WM atrophy has been reported in the previous studies (Ho et al., 2003). Due to the atrophy, it is possible that the voxels located in the border of the WM and other tissues in schizophrenics were estimated as having lower FA values. However, we minimized the problem by using the high dimensional warping algorithm, threshold masking for FA values and adopting relative WM volume as a nuisance variable. Another issue is the possible effect of long-term medication with antipsychotics. Although daily dose of antipsychotics was not correlated with FA values in schizophrenics, we could not estimate accurate cumulative doses of antipsychotics

throughout the duration of illness. Several morphological MR studies and animal studies suggested that the administration of antipsychotics could affect brain morphology (Wang et al., 2004; Lieberman et al., 2005). It is possible that long-term medication with antipsychotics also affects microstructure of the WM in schizophrenics. The longitudinal animal studies may clarify this issue.

In conclusion, we confirmed decreased FA in schizophrenics, compared to controls in the widespread WM areas in a Japanese sample. We found that age-dependent FA decline was more pronounced in chronic schizophrenics compared to controls, and that such FA decline was significantly correlated with duration of illness in patients. These observations suggest that decreased FA values in schizophrenia might be attributable, at least in part, to progressive changes in the WM after the onset of the illness.

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