

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS
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HELLO, BABY: Researchers believe they have found out why people view babies as special

Picture: INDEPENDENT ARCHIVES

Parental instinct proven innate

SCIENTISTS believe they have located the part of the brain key to forging the parental instinct to care for and nurture an infant, according to a study published recently.

This discovery helps answer the evolutionary question of why people view babies as special and could help doctors better identify people suffering from postnatal depression, researchers at the University of Oxford said.

"It is important because there has to be a reason why we look after our kids in general to make sure our species survives," said Morten Kringelbach, a neuroscientist, who coled the study.

"This is an idea that goes back to Darwin."

Kringelbach and his colleague, Alan Stein, showed how a region of the brain called the medial orbitofrontal cortex lights up to faces of infants, but not to adults. Kringelbach said measuring this response in men and women could help predict people at highest risk of developing the condition that can make new parents ignore their babies.

"This marker may not be as strong in people with post natal depression. If that is true we could use that to look at people to see if that response is dimmed and if they are more likely to get postnatally depressed." - Reuters

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