What are minor physical anomalies?

Minor physical anomalies (MPAs) are subtle anatomical deviations that have little functional or aesthetic impact. They may be traced to events occurring prenatally and may represent risk markers for underlying illness susceptibility. MPAs may be important risk indicators when an individual is already at high risk of developing psychosis, for example, having a first-degree relative with psychosis, and when multiple MPAs occur together in one individual.

What is the evidence for minor physical anomalies?

Moderate to high quality evidence finds a large increase in overall MPA scores in people with schizophrenia compared to controls. There were also increased MPA scores in people with schizophrenia compared to relatives, with no differences between relatives and controls.

Moderate quality evidence suggests MPA frequency is increased in six regions: head, eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet. Specific MPAs include tongue with irregular smooth-rough spots, single transverse palmar crease (one crease extending across the palm of the hand), syndactyly (wholly or partially united) 2nd and 3rd toes, malformed ears, low set ears, smaller head circumference, and curved fifth finger.

For more information see the technical table.