Welcome Dr. Zhang

The uOttawa Institute of Mental Health Research is delighted to announce that Dr. Xia Zhang will be joining our team of researchers this coming Summer. His work focuses on brain mechanisms contributing to drug abuse, and how they may relate to mental illness. In addition, Dr. Zhang holds a prestigious CIHR New Investigator award and is the Principal Investigator on three peer reviewed grants from NSERC, CIHR, and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada.

Breaking News...

Dr. Diana Koszycki, Research Director of the Stress & Anxiety Disorders Research Unit, has been awarded an Ontario Mental Health Foundation Grant worth a total of $147,648 over two years. This project will examine the efficacy of interpersonal psychotherapy in depressed women undergoing infertility treatment. Look for a full feature on this study in the summer edition of Breaking Through. Congratulations!

Program Evaluation Grants

Congratulations to Dr. Martine Flament, Research Director of the Youth Psychiatry Research Unit and Dr. Nicole Varshney for receiving Program Evaluation Grants from the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO worth $10,000 each! Dr. Flament’s grant will center on evaluation of the Youth Anxiety Disorders outpatient clinic program and will focus on producing a detailed record of the client population referred to the Youth Anxiety Disorders clinic, as well as the implementation of a systematic assessment procedure. Dr. Varshney’s grant will be used for conducting research evaluation of the Youth Program. The ultimate goal of the evaluation is to improve the program and to provide guidance as to how to deliver optimal services to youth with mental health concerns and their families.
Recent uOttawa IMHR Lectures

On February 3, 2006 Dr. Jeremy M. Grimshaw, Director of the Clinical Epidemiology Program at the Ottawa Health Research Institute and Director of the Centre for Best Practice, uOttawa Institute of Population Health, delivered a very-well attended lecture on "Improving Knowledge Translation: The Complexity of Professional Behaviour Change".

A central focus of this talk was to provide an update on the current evidence base on knowledge translation interventions to improve professional behaviour change, as well as to highlight the need for better behavioural models to support knowledge translation. Dr. Grimshaw concluded with a very interesting discussion of new knowledge translational research directions.

In addition, on Friday, March 3, 2006 Dr. Shawn Hayley, Canada Research Chair (Tier II): Neuroscience in the Department of Psychology at Carleton University gave a talk on the evidence for a Role of the Pro-Inflammatory Cytokines in Depression and Parkinson’s Disease.

Dr. Hayley’s talk focused on the interaction between the immune system and brain functioning as it relates to psychiatric (e.g., depression) and neurological disorders (e.g., Parkinson’s disease). As well, he discussed how dysregulation of the immune system might contribute to co-morbid pathologies. Finally, he elaborated on the stressor-immune interactions in depression.

Finally, as part of Social Work Week, the ROH social workers together with the Ontario Association of Social Workers-Eastern Branch, and the uOttawa Institute of Mental Health Research hosted a special lecture on March 7th by social worker Dr. Jim Campbell of Queens University Belfast, Northern Ireland. His talk, "Dealing with the aftermath of political violence in Northern Ireland", was very well attended and offered a number of suggestions for improving outcomes including more training to deal adequately with sectarianism, the need to embrace community development approaches and finally enhancing the skill base of social workings including critical incident debriefing, family systems, cognitive behavioural, psychodynamic approaches.

Upcoming Lecture…

Dr. Ernest Hartmann, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry at Tufts University School of Medicine and Director at the Sleep Disorders Center at Newton Wellesley Hospital will be delivering a lecture on Dreams in Psychiatric Illness on Thursday, April 13th, from 12 to 1:30 pm in the Lady Grey Auditorium. Dr. Hartmann’s interests include sleep, dreaming (especially those connected with PTSD), nightmares, and sleep disorders. He has developed theories to describe the continuum of consciousness from sleep. He is also conducting research on characterizing personality differences, and implications for mental health.

Conference Presentations

On February 8, 2006, Dr. Natacha Joubert gave a conference entitled “La souffrance a ses raisons…que la raison ignore” in La Sarre, Abitibi (Quebec). This event took place during National Suicide Prevention Week. Quebec has the highest suicide rate in Canada. Four persons commit suicide every day in Quebec and most of these persons are from Abitibi. Dr. Joubert spoke about suffering and the fact that the way we relate to suffering, our individual and collective beliefs and attitudes towards it, can add to our pain or relieve it.

As well, Dr. Kelley Raab of the Pastoral Services team, ROH, presented a paper at the First Global Conference on Hope: Probing the Boundaries, held at the Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic, in August 2005. Her paper was entitled, "Fostering Hope in a Psychiatric Hospital" and its focus was on the relationship between hope, religious and spiritual well-being, and mental health. Sponsored by Inter-DisciplinaryNet, the aim of the conference was to explore contemporary definitions, meanings, and expressions of hope in a interdisciplinary context. The paper was chosen for inclusion in a forthcoming book titled, Hope: Probing the Boundaries, edited by Stephen Neff, to be published in 2006 by Rodopi Press.
Recent Publications and Poster Presentations

Publications:


Presentations at Scientific Meetings:


Book Chapters:

The Schizophrenia Research Unit of the uOttawa Institute of Mental Health Research was formed in 2004 under the leadership of Dr. Patrice Boyer, who was recruited from University of Paris 6 Pitié-Salpêtrière. Supported by start-up grants from the Royal Ottawa Health Care Foundation, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the France-Canada Research Foundation, Dr. Boyer’s lab is currently investigating the relationships among long term memory deficits, hippocampal dysfunction, and functional outcome in schizophrenia patients. Probing neural activity in the hippocampus is possible with virtual reality technology and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), in collaboration with Dr. Luc Boulay, resident fMRI specialist in the Schizophrenia Research Unit. fMRI and morphological data analyses will be conducted under the supervision of the McConnell Brain Imaging Centre at McGill University, Montreal.

Together with prefrontal cortex abnormalities, the limbic system is clearly established in the pathophysiology of schizophrenia. The Schizophrenia Research Unit is conducting studies based on the hypothesis that long-term memory deficit and more precisely episodic memory deficit is the central neuropsychological dysfunction in schizophrenia. This deficit most likely corresponds to the failure of appropriate memory binding of an event with its context due to the lack of proper activation of the spatial properties of this context, mainly at the level of the right hippocampus. For example, since patients may not have the ability to store memories bound with their appropriate context, contextual cues in the environment make little sense, and memories cannot be counted upon to provide cues for appropriate behaviour. Perhaps most importantly, memories cannot be used to form an intact autobiographical memory of life events and their contexts, e.g., “what happened, where did it happen, with whom did it happen, and when did it happen?” The impact of this deficit in a patient’s daily life and on their abilities to “test reality” is extremely important and can explain a great deal of the symptoms they are presenting.

Currently, the research unit is validating methods of assessing episodic memory deficit, and we have found that a visuo-spatial measure of this component of memory (physical navigation) correlates highly with standard verbal measures (WMS-III). They are also in the initial stages of examining visuo-spatial navigation and its underlying neural circuitry in the hippocampus. Our preliminary data indicate that navigating through a 2D environment activates the hippocampus and parahippocampal gyrus in schizophrenia patients. Previous virtual reality navigation tasks have been shown to activate the posterior right hippocampus in healthy controls. They are currently developing a 3D virtual reality navigation paradigm to activate this region in both schizophrenia patients and healthy control participants.
A reminder that anyone wanting to improve their chances of having a successful review of their grant/funding application is invited to submit their protocol for review to the scientific review committee. Interested applicants must allow 3-4 weeks for the review to be completed. Please submit 6 copies of their proposal to the attention of Dr. Keith Busby, Research Ethics Coordinator, in room 2055C of the Lady Grey Building if you are interested in this service.

**Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR)**

**Regenerative Medicine and Nanomedicine - New Discoveries: High-Risk Seed Grants:** Value to be determined. The registration deadline is April 3rd, 2006.

**CIHR Knowledge Translation Award.** Valued at $100,000 and $20,000. The deadline for submission is May 15th, 2006.

**Proof of Principle Program (Phase I & II):** Phase I is valued at $150,000 and Phase II at $250,000. An investor must match CIHR funds at a 2:1 ratio (investor:CIHR). Letter of Intent is due May 1st, 2006.

**National Alliance for Research of Schizophrenia and Depression (NARSAD)**

**2007 Distinguished Investigator Award:** Applications are due May 15, 2006.

**2007 Young Investigator Award:** Applications are due July 25, 2006.

**2007 Staglin Award:** Applications will be available September, 2006.

**The Physician’s Services Incorporated (PSI) Foundation**

All Clinical Research, Medical Education Research & Development at the post M.D. level, Health Systems Research, Community-Based Research and Resident Research applications are due June 1, 2006.

**National Institutes of Mental Health Research (NIMH)**

Applications for **Program Project Grants and Center Grants, Research Grants, Research Career Development, and Education Grants** are due June 1st, 2006.

For a full list of NIMH Neuroscience Funding opportunities go to: http://neuroscienceblueprint.nih.gov/funding.html.

**Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SHRC)**

**Community-University Research Alliances (CURA):** Valued at $20,000 a year. Letter of Intent is due May 5, 2006.

**International Opportunities Fund - Development Grants:** Valued at up to $25,000. Application deadline is June 2nd, 2006.

**International Opportunities Fund - Project Grants.** Valued at up to $75,000. Application deadline is June 2nd, 2006.

**The Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre**

**Graduate Studentship Program:** Doctoral Studentships are valued at $20,000 per year for up to three years and $17,500 for up to two years at the Masters level. Applications are due May 15th, 2005.

**Comments & Suggestions**

The University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (IMHR) welcomes any suggestions as to how to make our newsletter more informative for you. To submit suggestions, please contact:

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*Thank you!*