CYBERPSYCH

2 November 2009

Cyberpsych is a weekly newsletter for students, staff and affiliates of the School of Behavioural Science at the University of Melbourne.

Contributions are welcome, please email your information to:
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THIS WEEK

TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER

TU1 Melbourne Cup Day Notes

There is no University Holiday held on this day.
There will be no Neuroanatomy for Neuropsychologists Lecture on this day (rescheduled to 10 November).

WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER

W1 Special Colloquium
Title: The neural mechanisms underlying cognitive control and their relationship to drug dependence.
Speaker: Dr Robert Hester.
Cognitive control mechanisms are critical for facilitating the efficient interaction of an organism with its environment. In humans, cognitive control processes, such as behavioral inhibition, allow appropriate behaviours to be facilitated and inappropriate ones to be suppressed. The importance of cognitive control processes for human behavior is evidenced by the vast array of both neurologic and psychiatric syndromes where control problems impair everyday functioning. For example, cognitive control underlies the ability to inhibit the immediate pursuit of pleasurable stimuli and for the development of adaptive patterns of behaviour - both key factors in drug dependence. I will present our research that has used neuroimaging and cognitive paradigms to elucidate the brain networks critical to different aspects of cognitive control in healthy adults, as well as the application of these methods to understanding behavioural and neural changes in chronic drug users that appear to contribute to the maintenance of their drug abuse.
Time: 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.
Venue: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

W2 Special colloquium
Title: The misguided pursuit of happiness.
Speaker: Professor David Winter, University of Hertfordshire.
The British government has committed 300 million pounds to the improvement of access to psychological therapies by training and employing 3,600 new therapists. The therapies concerned are required to be 'evidence-based', and are almost invariably cognitive-behavioural. Thus, at a time when the release of suppressed data is questioning the effectiveness of 'wonder drugs' such as Prozac, cognitive-behavioural therapy is being promoted as the new route to happiness. This talk will argue that such initiatives, which are by no means limited to the U.K., are denying client choice, and that the assumptions and evidence on which they are based may be little firmer than those which have now been largely dismantled in relation to Prozac.
Time: 4.15 pm - 5.15 pm.
Venue: Room 822, Redmond Barry Building.

THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER

TH1 Special Colloquium
Title: A psychological exploration of the moral circle.
Speaker: Dr Simon Laham.
Many of the pressing questions in contemporary moral philosophy and bioethics centre on the issue of moral status. What one thinks about abortion, stem cell research, euthanasia and animal experimentation depends on what entities in the world one deems worthy of moral consideration. Moral philosophers refer to entities worthy of moral consideration as members of the 'moral circle.' Although a prominent concept in philosophy, the moral circle has received little attention from psychologists. This talk will cover recent empirical research into the psychology of the moral circle. This research demonstrates that various cognitive and metacognitive factors influence moral circle size. Further, this work shows that the expansiveness of one's nominal moral circle has significant impact on various moral judgments and behaviors, ranging from attitudes towards animal experimentation to the moral treatment of outgroups.
Time: 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.
Venue: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

TH2 PhD Completion Seminars
Presenters: Liz Westrupp and Carly Molloy
Time: 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm.
Venue: Ground floor seminar room of the South Eastern building, Royal Children's Hospital.
Presentation One: Adult psychiatric outcomes of very low birth weight survivors: Exploring mechanisms of biological and social/environmental risk and vulnerability (Liz Westrupp).
This study sought to determine the rate and nature of mental health problems in adults born very low birth weight (VLBW) and to explore which biological, social and environment factors contribute to the development of these problems. We followed 117 VLBW and 32 normal birth weight (NBW) participants from birth, at age five, eight and fourteen years, and most recently, aged between mid to late twenties. Consistent with previous research, VLBW adults were more likely to be diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder than NBW peers. However, we also found that VLBW participants with biological risk were more likely, and VLBW participants without biological risk were less likely, than NBW peers to be diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder.
Presentation Two: Visual spatial information processing in extremely low birth weight and/or very preterm adolescents: perinatal risk factors and relationship with functional outcomes (Carly Molloy).
This study examined visual spatial information processing in extremely low birth weight/very preterm (ELBW/VP) adolescents, with a specific focus on determining the level of dependency of later stages of information processing on the integrity of earlier stages. Eighty-three ELBW/VP and 49 normal birth weight adolescents were assessed. ELBW/VP adolescents were found to perform more poorly across a range of visual spatial skills, with deficits in sensory and perceptual functioning influencing the capacity to encode and process visual information.

TH3 Community Education Seminar
Title: Mental Health Challenges in Culturally Diverse Communities.
Speaker: Ms Patricia Toczek.
Presented by: The Mood Disorders Support Group of The Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Victoria).
Patricia Toczek coordinated the Multicultural Mental Health Project while working at the Australian Polish Community Services in 2008. The project looked at attitudes to mental illness and prevention amongst five ethnically and linguistically diverse communities: Arabic speaking, Cambodian, Chinese, Macedonian and Polish. All had experienced the trauma of war as well as the stress of migration, some more recently than others. The Multicultural Health Project made recommendations aimed at increasing these communities' awareness of mental health and at reducing the stigma and shame associated with mental illness. Patricia Toczek will talk about the mental health problems shared by all five groups and the collaborative model developed during the study to facilitate a preventative approach to mental illness. She will address the question of culturally appropriate access to programs-how can co-operation between communities, ethno-specific agencies and mainstream service providers be enhanced? What are the best ways to support CALD communities to undertake their own mental health education?
Time: 7.30 pm - 9.00 pm.
Venue: Mental Health House, 270 Church St, Richmond.
Cost: Concession $10.00; MHFA(V) Members $15.00; Non-Members $30.00.
Registration: Prior registration please - admin@mentalhealthvic.org.au

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER

F1 Special Colloquium

Title: Auditory neuroscience: New neurocognitive models, computational implementations and their applications.
Speaker: Assoc Prof Neil McLachlan.
An overview of the new Object-Attribute Model of auditory processing will be presented. Some implications of this model for cognitive science will be explored in relation to recent behavioral data in the domain of music. Relationships between long-term memory and peripheral perceptual processing described in the model enable a radically new understanding of musical traditions beginning with systems of harmony and notation. Computational implementations of the model at various levels of approximation to neurophysiological systems have successfully replicated features of human auditory processing and have been applied to measuring human vocal behavior. For example algorithms have been developed to measure differences in speech prosody in people with the broader autism phenotype, changes in pitch and language production during TMS, and the occurrence of obstructed breathing during sleep.
Time: 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.
Venue: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

THE REST

1 MPHIL SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Title: Uptake and outcomes of a referral pathway for people with vision impairment and depressive symptoms.
An exciting opportunity exists for an outstanding student to undertake a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) through the Department of Ophthalmology at The University of Melbourne. The Department is located at the Eye and Ear Hospital, East Melbourne and is affiliated with the Centre for Eye Research Australia. The successful student will work on a Beyondblue funded project investigating the uptake and outcomes of a referral pathway for people with vision impairment and depressive symptoms. This is a longitudinal research project evaluating patients' experiences of psychological services following the identification of depressive symptoms within eye care settings. This is a fantastic opportunity for a student to work on a project involving both qualitative and quantitative data collection in a multidisciplinary clinical setting. The student will gain experience in working with patients and service providers. We are looking for a dedicated and motivated student with a first class Hons degree in psychology, or other health science subject. Further research experience is highly desirable.
Enquiries: Dr Gwyn Rees (9929 8363; grees@unimelb.edu.au).
Applications close: 13 November 2009.

2 UPCOMING EVENTS

2.1 Special Colloquium

Title: Sustained attention, ADHD and the dopamine D4 receptor.
Speaker: Dr Katherine Johnson, Lecturer, School of Psychology, Queen's University, Belfast.
Many genetic studies have demonstrated an association between the 7-repeat (7r) allele of a 48-base pair variable number of tandem repeats in exon 3 of the dopamine D4 receptor gene and the phenotype of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Previous studies have shown inconsistent associations between the 7r allele and neurocognitive performance in children with ADHD. We investigated the performance of
128 children with and without ADHD on the fixed and random versions of the Sustained Attention to Response Task. We employed time-series analyses of reaction-time data to allow a fine-grained analysis of reaction time variability, a candidate endophenotype for ADHD. Children were grouped into either the 7r-present group (possessing at least one copy of the 7r allele) or the 7r-absent group. The ADHD group made significantly more commission errors and was significantly more variable in RT in terms of fast moment-to-moment variability than the control group, but no effect of genotype was found on these measures. ADHD children without the 7r allele made significantly more omission errors, were significantly more variable in the slow-frequency domain and showed less sensitivity to the signal (d') than those ADHD children with the 7r and control children with or without the 7r. These results highlight the utility of time-series analyses of reaction time data for delineating the neuropsychological deficits associated with ADHD and the DRD4 VNTR. Absence of the 7-repeat allele in children with ADHD is associated with a neurocognitive profile of drifting sustained attention that gives rise to variable and inconsistent performance.
When: Monday 16 November, 10.00 am - 11.00 pm.
Where: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

2.2 Special Colloquium

Title: Sacred values and the moral logic of intergroup conflict.
Speaker: Dr Jeremy Ginges, Assistant Professor of Psychology, New School for Social Research, New York.
At least since the end of the Second World War the social sciences, as well as economic and foreign policy decision-making, have been dominated by the "rational actor" perspective which assumes that people make decisions on the basis of rational choice ("cost-benefit") calculations that are commensurable across cultures. However, in many intergroup conflicts people collectively construe resources (such as land), activities (such as hunting a particular animal), or ideas (such as obtaining a nuclear weapon) under dispute into "sacred" values. In this talk I will present results from experiments run in Israel, Palestine, Indonesia and Iran, demonstrating how this transformation leads to non-instrumentally rational behavior, and some of the consequences for real world intergroup conflicts.
When: Monday 23 November, 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.
Where: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

2.3 Special Colloquium

Title: Generative models of function estimation.
Speaker: Dr Daniel R. Little, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Indiana University, Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences.
Typically, in science, we design our inference approaches to trade off fit to observed data (models are good that fit well) and complexity (models or explanations that fit or explain everything are bad). In the present research, we examine how observers balance fit and complexity by asking observers to estimate causal models for noisy data. Specifically, participants are shown a number of scatterplots that vary in the number of data points shown, the noise added to the true function and the complexity of the true function. For each set of noisy data points, participants estimate a function which best captures their guess at the causal explanation between the input and the output. Statistical regression models such as Bayesian linear regression and Gaussian process regression are used to develop generative psychological models to examine biases toward simple explanations, rule-based vs. similarity-based processing, extrapolation and efficiency.
When: Thursday 26 November, 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.
Where: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

3 EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Clinical Neuropsychologist

The Clinical Neuropsychology Service at the Royal Adelaide Hospital is seeking expressions of interest for a full time permanent Clinical Neuropsychologist (PO2). The position may be offered at either PO2 (for applicants who meet the criteria for registration with the SA Psychological Board) or PO1 (for applicants still to complete their thesis). I welcome students to contact me on (08) 8222 5790 or at Amie.Foran@health.sa.gov.au to discuss this opportunity. The successful applicant will gain experience working with a wide diversity of patients across both inpatient and outpatient settings. Professional supervision will be provided.
Applications close: 6 November.

3.2 Clinical and / or Health Psychologist

The Centre for Clinical and Health Psychology is a busy private psychology clinic in Doncaster East. Psychological services are provided to clients who present with a range of issues including mood/anxiety disorders, illness/health related problems, disordered eating, and perinatal issues. Our therapists are committed to providing high quality, evidence-based psychological services to clients with a range of presenting issues. We have beautifully appointed counselling rooms with a well-stocked resource library and reception. Four friendly psychologists currently staff the Centre. We seek an enthusiastic psychologist (minimum two years post full registration), with at least a Masters or Doctoral degree in either Clinical Psychology or Health Psychology, to join our team. The psychologist will be experienced in evidence-based therapies such as CBT, ACT, Solution Focussed Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy. This role is perfect for the psychologist looking for flexibility and financial rewards of private practice setting without the hassle and headache of managing and marketing a business. The position offers a varied caseload, opportunity for group work, flexible and family friendly hours, regular supervision, and a friendly and collegial atmosphere.
Employment type: This is a part time position of 1 to 2 days per week, with opportunity to increase.
For further information please visit:
http://www.psychxchange.com.au/JobDetail.aspx?JobID=6345 and/or
www.healthpsychologycentre.com.au.

3.3 Psychologist, Adolescent Forensic Health Service

The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Melbourne is one of the world's great children's hospitals and is committed to providing outstanding care to children and their families. AFHS is seeking a Clinical or Forensic Psychologist with experience in mental health and/ or working with vulnerable young people who may engage in high risk behaviours such as substance use, self-harm and suicidal behaviours. The purpose of the Psychologist role is to ensure young people referred by Youth Justice to AFHS receive appropriate psychological assessments and interventions to address offending behaviour and identified mental health needs. We offer competitive salary packages, varied and interesting work, career pathways and a great location.
For further information please visit:
http://rch.mhr.com.au/jobdetail.asp?jobid=2045.
Applications close: 8 November.

3.4 Research Fellow

Family Group Facilitator - TBI Group.
School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine, Monash University.
Headstart is a clinical research program for the study of the impact of multi-family group intervention on the social and psychological functioning of people with traumatic brain injury and their care givers. An enthusiastic senior clinician is required for the program to work with people with acquired brain injury and their families, which will involve using a multi-family group model of practice for 40 families over a 2 year period. Appointment will be made on a sessional basis and involve varying hours averaging up to 21.75 hours per week. The successful applicant will have a post graduate clinical qualification in a relevant allied health field and registration as a clinical practitioner in that field, with a background in clinical practice and work with traumatic brain injury or disability and an enthusiasm for family and group intervention in clinical practice.
Employment type: This is a sessional position, located at Notting Hill.
For further information please visit:
http://monash.turborecruit.com.au/job/job_details.cfm?id=418762&from=direct
Applications close: 4 November.

4 NEXT WEEK

4.1 Special Colloquium

Title: A cognitive neuroscientific model of recognition memory.
Speaker: Dr Marc Seal.
Our conscious recollection of past experiences provides us with rich phenomenological detail as we relive that event. Rather than a literal reproduction of the event the act of recollection is reconstructive, as we draw together features of the event into a coherent representation of our experience. This process is not faultless and often we experience memory distortions. With colleagues, I have employed a cognitive neuroscientific approach to the systematic investigation of distortions in recognition memory at the behavioural, cognitive and neurobiological levels. I will presenting an overview of our findings with young healthy control participants as well as clinical participants with Chronic Schizophrenia, older subjects with Mild Cognitive Impairment, young adults at high risk of developing Psychosis and long-term, heavy cannabis users. Finally, I will present an overview of some recent neuroimaging research where we have been investigating the impact of white matter connectivity on recognition memory function.
When: Monday 9 November, 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.
Where: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

4.2 Special Colloquium

Title: Empirical tests (and the debunking) of appealing hypotheses about the nature and treatment of depression.
Speaker: Professor Robert DeRubeis, University of Pennsylvania.
Progress in research on mental disorders is limited not only by the inherent complexities of the subject matter, but also by the attractive features of certain hypotheses that render them resistant to disconfirmation. In the study of psychopathology and its treatment these features include their ironic qualities, their representativeness, and their connection to the interests of guild members. This colloquium will address research on several popular but only weakly supported claims, such as the idea that depressed people are more realistic than their nondepressed counterparts, the durable assertion that somatic treatments are required to reverse severe depressive symptoms, and the assertion that the psychotherapy relationship is more important than therapy technique. New research findings that challenge these these claims will be presented.
When: Tuesday 10 November, 1.00 pm - 2.15 pm.
Where: Room 516, Redmond Barry Building.

4.3 Neuropsychology Students' Society Annual Lecture Series - Final Lecture

Title: Neuroanatomy for Neuropsychologists: Lecture Six.
Presenter: A/Prof Michael Saling, University of Melbourne.
This year we will be continuing our tradition of holding a 6-week lecture series, kindly presented by A/Prof Michael Saling. A/Prof Saling will be including some information on brain function in addition to brain structure. This event is free to attend, and everyone is welcome.
Web: www.n-psych.com/nss/events.html.
When: Tuesday 10 November, 5.15 pm - 6.45 pm (rescheduled due to Melbourne Cup Day).
Where: 1st Floor, Medley Theatre, Redmond Barry Building.

4.4 Public Science Lecture

Title: What can neuroscience tell us about the nature of consciousness?
Speaker: Prof Jason Mattingley, Neuroscientist and clinical neuropsychologist, Queensland Brain Institute & School of Psychology, The University of Queensland.
All are most welcome to attend this free public lecture.
When: Tuesday 10 November, 6.00 pm - 7.00 pm.
Where: Hooper Lecture Theatre, La Trobe University, Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus.
Enquiries: Kristen Pascoe, Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering (9479 2556; k.pascoe@latrobe.edu.au).

4.5 AACBT Victoria Workshop

Title: Maximizing the Impact of Cognitive Therapy for Depression: Insights from Clinical Practice, Supervision and Research on the Process of Change.
Presenter: Prof. Robert DeRubeis, Professor of Psychology, University of Pennslyvania.
Robert DeRubeis Ph.D. has more than 30 years practicing cognitive therapy, training therapists, and conducting research on the outcomes and mechanisms of action in cognitive therapy. He has authored more than 90 articles and book chapters on the treatment of Depression and has received the Academy of Cognitive Therapy's Aaron T. Beck Award for his contributions to research on cognitive therapy. Prof. DeRubeis will provide practitioners with the tools they need to implement cognitive therapy most effectively as well as addressing the limitations of the cognitive approach. He will begin by articulating the core principles of cognitive therapy. Then describe the between the apparent simplicity of the cognitive approach and its adaptability to the individual circumstances and problems presented by individuals who present for therapy. Using case examples, videotape vignettes, and role–plays with audience participants, he will illustrate the most common and most difficult problems encountered by therapists as they attempt to maximise the power of cognitive therapy. Examples will include: integrating medication and behavioural techniques with the cognitive model; maximizing the synergy between medical treatment and cognitive therapy, when combined treatment is the best option.
When: Wednesday 11 November, 9.00 am - 5.00 pm.
Where: Royal Melbourne Hospital Function & Convention Centre, Seminar Room 1.
Registration: www.aacbtvic.org.au.

5 DEADLINES

Thursday 12 November: Casual pay timecard approval due by 5pm, for Thursday 19 October pay day.

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