

Center for Applied Neuroscience



9th Annual Scientific Conference

ADVANCES IN RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES IN NEUROSCIENCE

Dr. Bruce Cuthbert

Title:

The Development and Implications of Research Domain Criteria in Mental Health Research

Abstract:

The pace of advances in treatment and prevention for mental disorders has lagged noticeably compared to other areas of health. An emerging consensus suggests that a significant cause of this situation stems from the dependence of clinical research on a diagnostic system based on presenting symptoms, and that mental disorders as currently conceived are not specific disease entities but heterogeneous syndromes that lack validity. In response, the US National Institute of Mental Health initiated the Research Domain Criteria project (RDoC) in order to foster alternative approaches to research. RDoC is a research framework that calls for studies based on the rapidly accelerating knowledge about basic dimensions of behavior (such as fear or working memory) and the structure and functioning of the brain. Psychopathology is then viewed in terms of varying degrees of abnormality relative to the normal distribution of functioning. This presentation will provide an overview of the RDoC framework and its approach to issues such as the mind-body problem, dimensionality of disorders, new treatments and clinical trials, and new ideas for prevention and pre-emption of disorders. Particular emphasis will be given to the important role of development and environmental influences as they relate to the development of psychopathology.

Dr. Bruce Cuthbert directs the Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) Unit at the National Institute of Mental Health, which leads NIMH's development of a research framework for psychopathology based upon dimensions of behavior and neural systems. He also served as NIMH Acting Director from 2015 to 2016. Dr. Cuthbert has led the RDoC project since its inception in 2009, also leading the Division of Adult Translational Research from 2009-2014. He returned to NIMH in 2009 following four years as a professor at the University of Minnesota, and was previously Chief of the NIMH Adult Psychopathology Branch. Prior to joining NIMH he served for eleven years as an investigator in the US Army studying combat-related stress and biological rhythms, and for seventeen years on the faculty at the University of Florida. Dr. Cuthbert received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology and psychophysiology from the University of Wisconsin, and is known for his translational research on emotions and anxiety disorders. He is a fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and a past-president of the Society for Psychophysiological Research.



CAN@UCY.AC.CY



+357 22895190



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