

Brain researcher recognized for contributions to understanding, treatment of drug dependence

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Warren K. Bickel, director of the Center for Substance Abuse at the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, has been selected as the 2011 recipient of the American Psychological Association Don Hake Translational Research Award. Sponsored by the Association for Behavior Analysis International, the award recognizes individuals whose work spans basic and applied research.

According to awards chair Cythia Pietras, the award is being presented to Bickel for his contributions to understanding [drug dependence](#) and treatment, impulsivity, and [behavioral economics](#), and for disseminating that work to a wide audience.

Bickel, who is a professor with the research institute and professor of psychology at Virginia Tech, examines decision-making processes in the brain that support dysfunctional decision-making, including addiction, and seeks novel therapeutic means to repair those processes. One area of his research is directed at the process involved in preferring instant gratification over a future health benefit. His research demonstrating that this preference for immediate rewards can be changed with a novel [therapeutic approach](#) appears in the February 2011 issue of [Biological Psychiatry](#).

According to Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute Executive Director Michael Friedlander, "Dr. Bickel's research is blazing a new

path to understanding how the brain's temporal discounting system --the ability to differentially value things based on how far into the future they may occur -- contributes to decisions regarding substance abuse, as well as how the executive processes in the human brain can be enhanced through rehabilitative training to potentially improve outcomes for those who are affected by substance abuse. He also has a commitment and well honed skill for effectively communicating the significance of his work to the scientific and medical communities and the general public. We are very fortunate to have such a talented scientist and communicator as part of the research institute here in Roanoke."

Bickel will present an invited address at the 2011 American Psychological Association convention in Washington, D.C. in August.

Provided by Virginia Tech

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