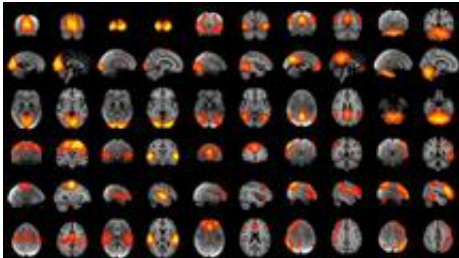


# New treatments for mental illness under threat

June 16 2011

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Lack of neuroscience funding is threatening the development of new drugs.

(Medical Xpress) -- Scientists have voiced their serious concerns over major pharmaceutical companies' abrupt withdrawal from research into mental illness and neurological diseases.

Coupled with low levels of neuroscience research funding, this could mean that fewer new treatments are developed for people with conditions such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's.

A report, written by Professor Guy Goodwin of Oxford University and Professor David Nutt of Imperial College for the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology, states that 'the withdrawal of research resources is a withdrawal of hope for patients and their families'.

Professor Guy Goodwin of Oxford University's Department of

Psychiatry said: "The issue here is not just that a very key part of Europe's knowledge economy is under serious threat, it's that the withdrawal of research resources means the slow down – and even outright cessation in some areas – of new treatments being developed, and this will inevitably affect patient well-being."

Around one in three people in Europe is estimated to suffer from one or more of these conditions in any year. Highly prevalent disorders such as depression, dementia and addiction are thought to now account for some 35% of Europe's total disease burden – that's higher than cancer or heart disease.

"Despite the public health imperative, not only has EU research funding remained very low, but – even worse – big pharma is increasingly coming to see research into better neuropsychiatric drug targets as economically non-viable," said Professor David Nutt. "With Europe's extraordinary tradition in neuroscience innovation relying so heavily on private-sector investment, the consequences for the region's research base and public health agenda are of major concern."

The problem is that identifying reliable drug targets in psychiatry and neurology is particularly complex and challenging, resulting in longer development times for new drugs and higher failure rates. This means that the costs of drug discovery and development no longer translate into significant returns from the market for prescription medicines. Historically the vast majority of European funding for brain research has come from [pharmaceutical companies](#).

The report follows a summit held by the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology in March 2011 that was attended by 60 key representatives from academia, government, the pharmaceutical industry, the biotechnology sector, regulatory agencies and patients' organizations.

The report recommends that public investment in neuroscience is increased and that industry shares their data and compounds with the academic research community where they are no longer needed so that they do not go to waste.

Provided by Oxford University

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