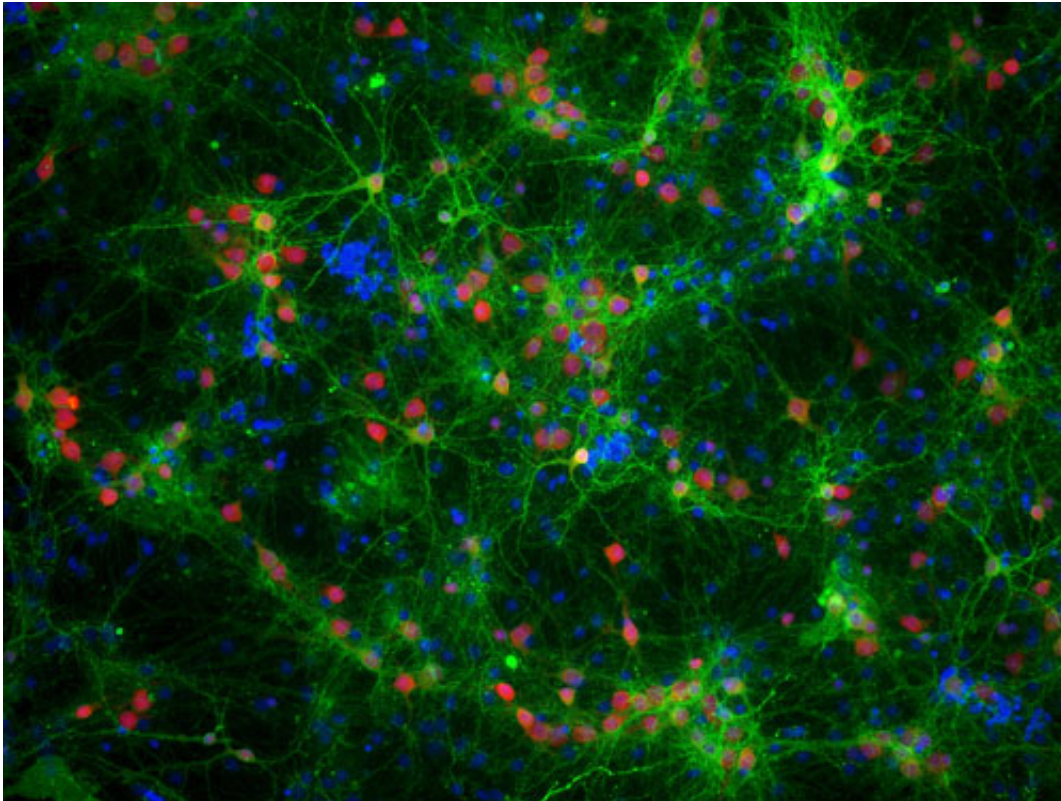


Video: Social interactions and the brain

January 28 2016



Our brain cells, called neurons, work together to produce every memory, thought, behavior and sensation. The human brain has 80 to 100 billion neurons--each of which transmits and receives signals to and from thousands of other neurons. To fully understand how the brain functions, scientists research how these neural circuits work. Credit: Parijat Sengupta, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Many animals, from insects to humans, are social. Their brains have evolved to be sensitive to sensory cues that carry social information,

such as: speech sounds, pheromones and visual cues. But very little is known about how animal brains process and integrate this information.

With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), neuroscientist Mala Murthy and a multidisciplinary team at Princeton University want to understand what happens in the brain when animals process information, communicate and socialize. The team is using courtship and mating behavior of fruit flies as an experimental system to reveal how sensory input is processed and integrated with information about a fly's internal state to produce social behavior.

Murthy says what the researchers are learning will contribute to a better understanding of interaction and communication in many animals, including humans.

Provided by National Science Foundation

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