NCCR Synapsy “The synaptic bases of mental diseases”

The National Centre of Competence and Research (NCCR) Synapsy is composed of more than 230 active members, across 28 research groups in 7 institutions in Geneva, Lausanne and Basel (http://www.nccr-synapsy.ch). Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, with over 17.5 million Swiss francs for a four-year period, it bridges together brain science and clinical research in psychiatry.

With cross-competences in neurobiology, genetics and psychiatry, the NCCR Synapsy aims to discover the synaptic mechanisms underlying mental and cognitive diseases, such as mood and anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and developmental disorders. Research in Synapsy is driven by strong collaborations between basic neuroscientists and clinicians through well-integrated research projects based on clinical cohorts. From a long-term perspective, scientific advances should directly benefit patients, by elaborating novel therapeutic approaches and eventually curative treatments, thereby improving their quality of life. Additionally, the NCCR SYNAPSY aims to introduce a neuroscience culture into the Departments of Psychiatry of both the University of Geneva and Lausanne, with the aim of training promising young clinicians and thereby promoting the emergence of a new generation of psychiatrists and a novel science – neuroscience based psychiatry.

The NCCR SYNAPSY projects are organized around two main research axis: the first concerns biological factors influencing development, from conception to the first years of life, in view of identifying genes that could affect vulnerability to mental illness; the second concerns environmental factors associated with early life experiences, which could leave an imprint in the brain. As the major research focus of the NCCR SYNAPSY is the investigation and manipulation of sensitive periods during development and their impact on specific psychiatric-relevant phenotypes, it is a great opportunity for Synapsy to present our current research at the ESCAP 2017 Geneva meeting.

Anouchka JUNOD, PhD
Manager, NCCR Synapsy

NCCR Synapsy
Campus Biotech
Chemin des Mines 9
CH 1202 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 379 11 22
anouchka.junod@unige.ch
http://www.nccr-synapsy.ch/

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