

DAVID JOHN NUTT
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David Nutt is currently the Edmond J. Safra Professor of Neuropsychopharmacology and Head of the Centre for Neuropsychopharmacology in the Division of Brain Science, Dept of Medicine, Imperial College London. He is also visiting professor at the Open University in the UK and Maastricht University in the Netherlands.

After 11+ entry to Bristol Grammar he won an Open Scholarship to Downing College Cambridge, then completed his clinical training at Guy's Hospital London. After a period in neurology to MRCP he moved to Oxford to a research position in psychiatry at the MRC Clinical Pharmacology Unit where he obtained his DM. On completing his psychiatric training in Oxford, he continued there as a lecturer and then later as a Wellcome Senior Fellow in psychiatry. He then spent two years as Chief of the Section of Clinical Science in the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in NIH, Bethesda, USA. He returned to England in 1988 to set up the Psychopharmacology Unit in Bristol University, an interdisciplinary research grouping spanning the departments of Psychiatry and Pharmacology, before moving to Imperial College London in December 2008 where he leads a similar group with a particular focus on brain imaging, especially Positron Emission Tomography.

Working with others David has many significant research achievements in both the clinical and pre-clinical arenas. He made seminal discoveries relating to the neurotransmitter changes leading to the antidepressant effect of ECT. He discovered the concept of inverse agonism at the benzodiazepine receptor and from this the molecular processes underpinning benzodiazepine dependence and withdrawal. These led to the use of the antagonist flumazenil as a possible clinical treatment for some withdrawal syndromes. Other clinical firsts include finding the role of benzodiazepine receptor dysfunction in panic disorder, subsequently validated using [11C]flumazenil PET. Further research using [11C]WAY100635 PET in panic disorder found a deficit of 5-HT_{1A} receptors in the brain's anxiety circuit that was rectified by treatment with SSRIs. He pioneered the use of SSRIs to replace benzodiazepines in the treatment of anxiety disorders and proved the necessary role of serotonin enhancement in their enduring actions. Other clinical advances include discovering the utility of clonidine for REM behaviour disorder and SSRIs for night terrors.

David has made significant impact in addiction research. Using [11C]raclopride he reframed the understanding of addiction by refuting the theory that dopamine mediated reward to all addictive substances, showing it had no role in heroin reinforcement. Further using [11C]carfentanil PET he revealed alterations in endogenous opioid function as a critical mediators of some addictions including gambling. In recent years he has developed a strong psychopharmacology research theme using fMRI and MEG to conduct the first modern brain imaging studies of psychedelic drugs such as psilocybin and LSD. These revealed unexpected perturbations of rhythmic activity that predicted potential antidepressant effects which were then realized in a landmark trial in people with resistant depression. Very recently, using the novel 5-HT_{2A} agonist tracer [11C]Cimbi-36 he has produced the first PET data that reveals a deficit of serotonin in depressed people.

In 2009 David founded the charity DrugScience and chairs its scientific committee. Previously he has been President of the European Brain Council, the British Neuroscience Association, the British Association of Psychopharmacology and the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology as well as Chair of the UK Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Colleges of Physicians, of Psychiatrists and of the Academy of Medical Sciences. He is also the UK Director of the European Certificate and Masters in Affective Disorders courses and a member of the International Centre for Science in Drug Policy. He has edited the Journal of Psychopharmacology for over twenty five years and acts as the psychiatry drugs advisor to the British National Formulary. He has published over 500 original research papers, a similar number of reviews and books chapters, eight government reports on drugs and 34 books, including one for the general public, 'Drugs Without the Hot Air', which won the Transmission book prize in 2014 for Communication of Ideas. The second edition of this has just been released.

He broadcasts widely to the general public both on radio and television; highlights include being a subject for many BBC programmes including The Life Scientific, Hard Talk and On the Ropes and A Good Read. His research has been featured in many tv programmes the BBC Horizon and the Channel 4 documentaries Ecstasy and Cannabis -live. His research has been the subject of the film #magicmedicine and the play All you need is LSD. He is much in demand for public affairs programs on therapeutic as well as illicit drugs, their harms and their classification and the relationship between scientists and government. He also lectures widely to the public as well as to the scientific and medical communities, e.g. at the Cheltenham Science and How the Light Gets In Festivals, Café Scientifiques and Skeptics in the Pub. In 2010 The Times Eureka science magazine voted him one of the 100 most important figures in British Science, and the only psychiatrist in the list. In 2013 he was awarded the Nature/Sense about Science John Maddox prize for Standing up for Science.

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