

Cognition Colloquium

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From social robotics to participatory research: What we can learn from the study of autism for mental health challenges of the 21st century

Evidence exists that research in mental health does not achieve the investment that would match the current burden of ill health on the individual and community. Several recent international initiatives such as ROAMER or RDoC have identified major challenges faced by mental health and put forward ideas on how science can address them. Among those ideas are the prevention of mental disorders and focusing on young people, elucidation of causal mechanisms of mental disorders, and the reduction of stigma and empowering of service users and carers. In my talk I will present work addressing these ideas, which has been conducted in my group over the past years in and with individuals with autism spectrum condition. Given the importance of social factors for mental health, I will put a special focus of social cognition, its neuronal basis and its trainability. Given that autism spectrum conditions involve core, and sometimes selective, deficits in social cognition, they represent valuable models for understanding behavioral correlates and brain underpinnings of social cognition also in typical development. The works that will be shown encompass studies in social robotics, social and affective neuroscience as well as patient and public involvement approaches.



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