Smart Drugs: How smart are they?

Lawrence M. Hinman, N.S. Member

The Center for Ethics in Science & Technology (http://ethicscenter.net), an international ethics center with a sustaining commitment from UC San Diego, the University of San Diego, and San Diego State University, held its monthly “Exploring Ethics” meeting in conjunction with Reuben H. Fleet Science Center on April 1, 2009 on “Smart Drugs: How smart are they?”

The program featured Dr. George Koob, The Scripps Research Institute, a specialist in the neurobiology of addiction, as the principal speaker, with a panel of commentators including Veronica Galvan (Psychology Department, University of San Diego), Joan McRobbie (Chief Ethics Officer, San Diego Unified School District) and Mark Trotter (Minister, First United Methodist Church, retired), with Michael Kalichman (UC San Diego and Co-Director, Ethics Center) as Moderator.

Professor Koob’s presentation concentrated on Ritalin, Adderall, and Modafinil (Provigil). He outlined the basic neurobiology of these three cognitive enhancers, the results of current research on their effectiveness, and some of the risk factors associated with each. Koob also noted that drugs such as Modafinil tend not to be drugs of addiction because they are less effective in producing euphoria and are not readily smokable. Both Ritalin and Adderall have significant side effects, but so far this does not seem to be a significant issue with Modafinil. Advocating the judicious use of these medications for ADHD for children and adolescents and their use for adults with cognitive problems from neuropsychiatric disorders, but expressed much stronger reservations about the use of cognitively enhancing drugs simply for boosting the brain power of healthy people. “There’s no free ride,” Koob concluded, “with chemicals in the brain.”

Prior to the program on March 31, the Center had two participants on a one hour call-in interview show on KPBS, the local NPR affiliate. George Koob, our principal speaker, was joined by Dr. Tricia Mark. S. Frankel

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2010 Meeting: May 10-11 in Washington, DC

The 2010 Neuroethics Society Meeting will be held May 10th and 11th, 2010 at the Carnegie Institution for Science in Washington, DC located at 1530 P Street NW.

The program committee has been working hard to organize an exciting line-up of speakers and presenters. The event will include engaging panels and symposia, networking opportunities, the Society business meeting, and a discounted book sale.

Stay tuned for information on poster presentations and special funding opportunities. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Program Committee for the 2010 Meeting:

Turhan Canli
Stony Brook University

Anjan Chatterjee
University of Pennsylvania

Judy Illes
University of British Columbia, Canada

Mark S. Frankel
AAAS

Tamami Fukushi
Japan Science and Technology Agency, Japan

Klaus-Peter Lesch
University of Wuerzburg, Germany

Alvaro Pascual-Leone
Harvard University

Adina Roskies
Dartmouth College
Neuroethics Event Calendar

Please check our website for the most up-to-date listings.

**May 16**  
Workshop on Applied Neuroethics  
Lecce, Italy. The Theological Faculty "Regina Apuliae" in Molfetta (Bari), Italy is sponsoring a series of events concerning neuroethical issues. Speakers at this one day workshop include Mario Signore: “Neurosciences and Human Freedom”; Vito Antonio Amodio: “New Horizons in Psychopharmacology”; Laura Tafaro: “Neurosciences and New Prospective in Health Rights”; Vincenzo Viva: “Bioethics and Neuroscience dilemmas”.  
http://www.neuroscienzeteologia.it/

**May 16 - 17**  
2009 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry  
San Francisco, CA. The event will comprise of a series of symposia on philosophical issues in child and adolescent psychiatry.  
http://alien.dowling.edu/~cperring/aappcapconference.html

**May 22-23**  
“Conceptual Issues in fMRI” A multi-disciplinary workshop at the University of Guelph.  
www.issuesinfMRI.ca

**May 29 – June 4**  
3rd US/Canada Region International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) School of Neuroscience  
Vancouver, Canada. The School offers students from Africa, Asia and Latin America advanced neuroscience courses taught by local and foreign experts. This year, like last, neuroethics will be part of the curriculum. The National Core for Neuroethics at the University of British Columbia, in collaboration with the Neuroethics Society and its International Neuroethics Network, will be sponsoring Dr. George M. Wanderi from Kenya to attend the IBRO School.  
http://schools.ibro.info/Pub/Pub_Main_Display.asp?LC_Docs_ID=3791

**June 4-5**  
Meeting on Coma and Consciousness Clinical, Societal and Ethical Implications  
Berlin, Germany. This two day satellite symposium of the 13th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Scientific Studies of Consciousness will focus on the ethical, societal & clinical implications of coma and consciousness.  

**June 5-8**  
Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness: 13th Annual Meeting  
Berlin, Germany. The thirteenth annual meeting of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (ASSC) will be held from 5 till 8 June 2009 at the Berlin School of Mind and Brain and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences.  
http://www.assc13.com/

**June 10**  
Patients’ Voices Matter: What doctors can learn from talking with patients  
Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada. This public talk hosted by Novel Tech Ethics will be given by Mark Bernstein and will explore patients’ experience using qualitative research.  
http://www.noveltechethics.ca/site_events.php?page=405

**June 11 – 14**  
Toward a Science of Consciousness Conference: Investigating Inner Experience: Brain, Mind, Technology  
Hong Kong, China. The conference will include preconference workshops, keynote and plenary talks, plenary panels, concurrent talks, posters, technology exhibits, film screenings, art shows, music and other special performances.  
www.asiaconsciousness.org/TSC

**June 11-12**  
Annual Meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology Preconference workshop on Animal Neuroethics  
Bloomington, Indiana. Didactic talks covering neuroethics, animal ethics, the systems neuroscience of pain and well-being, and other foundational topics in animal neuroethics, followed by a general discussion aimed at identifying the philosophical and scientific questions in this area and promising approaches to answering them. Featuring Colin Allen, Martha Farah, Valerie Hardcastle, Adrienne Martin, Mena Morales, Adam Schriver and Ken Sufka.

**June 12-14**  
35th Annual Meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology  
Bloomington, Indiana. Topics include complex systems, evolution at 150, and implicit & explicit beliefs.  
http://www.socphilpsych.org/CFP.html

**June 30**  
Application Deadline for The Social Self: Summer School in Neuroscience and Philosophy of Mind  
Alghero, Italy. (Held in September.) The aim of the summer school is to provide a limited number of qualified students with the opportunity to attend short courses focused on the analysis of the social roots of the self.  
http://www.sei.architettura.uniss.it/summerschoolthesocialself
May, 2009

July 6-7  UCL Law Faculty Fourteenth Current Legal Issues Colloquium  London, England. This year’s colloquium will explore Law and Neuroscience and has speakers from around the world taking part in the program.  http://www.ucl.ac.uk/laws/events/docs/UCL_law_neuroscience.pdf

July 8  16th International Conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology: Converging Technologies, Changing Societies  Enschede, Netherlands. The theme of SPT 2009 is Converging Technologies, Changing Societies, and focuses on the increasing convergence of information technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and cognitive technologies (also called NBIC technologies), and the implications this convergence has for society.  http://www.utwente.nl/ceptes/spt2009/

July 16  ESF-COST Conference-Call for applications and abstracts  Acquafredda di Maratea, Italy. The application and abstract submission deadline for the ESF-COST Conference on Law and neuroscience: our growing understanding of the human brain and its impact on our legal system is July 16.

July 28-29  1st UK Postgraduate STS Conference  Nottingham, England. This is a conference for postgraduate students, mostly from the United Kingdom, who are working on science and technology from a science and technology studies perspective, broadly defined.  www.psts.org.uk

August 9-16  Wellcome Trust School on Biology of Social Cognition  Cambridge, UK. The principal aim of the workshop is to provide an intensive week of training for advanced graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty with an interest in the biological underpinnings of social behavior.  https://registration.hinxton.wellcome.ac.uk/

August 24-27  Moral Responsibility: Neuroscience, Organization & Engineering  Delft, the Netherlands. This conference will address traditional philosophical questions about responsibility, especially as they apply to the following areas: neuroscience and the law, collective and individual responsibility, science, technology and engineering.  http://www.ethicsandtechnology.eu/responsibility


Did you receive your 2010 Annual Meeting Topics survey?

Earlier, surveys were sent out via email to all members. Another link for the survey is in the email that went out with this newsletter. Please take a moment to answer the brief questions. Your input is very important in setting the agenda for the 2010 Neuroethics Society Meeting.

Want to see your event listed here?

Events considered for listing in the newsletter and on the website are submitted online. To submit your event, visit our website and select “Resources” and then “Event Submission.”

A report on "Neuroethics in Canada: Perspectives and Future Directions" is available from the National Core for Neuroethics at the University of British Columbia. If you wish to receive a copy, please send your request to Mr. Neil Chahal at neil.chahal@ubc.ca.
Neuroethics Society welcomes Executive Director

The Neuroethics Society is pleased to welcome Karen Graham as our first Executive Director. As Executive Director, Karen supports the Board of Directors and coordinates resources within the Society.

What brings Karen to the Neuroethics Society?

She has been at the Dana Foundation and the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives since 2000. She organizes and oversees neuroscience-related discussions for the public, at the Dana Center in Washington, DC. She also coordinates public outreach neuroscience programs at universities through the Dana Alliance Lending Library program.

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Bertram Gallant, Academic Integrity Coordinator at UC San Diego. The show, “These Days,” was hosted by Maureen Cavanaugh, and can be heard on-line at http://www.kpbs.org/radio/ these_days;id=14240.

Tricia Gallant noted that issues relating to smart drugs have not surfaced yet in the discussion of academic integrity issues, but a number of callers related personal experiences of using such meds.

A number of interesting issues were raised, including what policy should be instituted for the use of smart drugs prior to standardized exams such as the SAT. Gallant noted the importance of larger issues about societal pressures that result in students feeling the pressure to take cognitively-enhancing drugs. Callers raised questions about other, non-pharmacological ways of attaining cognitive enhancement and about issues of fairness. Gallant and others noted that such drugs may increase memory, but not be helpful in other, arguably more important cognitive tasks.

Resources from the program, including video, Dr. Koob’s PowerPoint Presentation, and a written summary of the presentations and discussion, will be posted as they become available at: http://ethicscenter.net/Events/FleetProgram/Smart_Drugs.html.

Five years ago, Martha J. Farah, Judy Illes, Robert Cook-Deegan, Howard Gardner, Eric Kandel, Patricia King, Eric Parens, Barbara Sahakian and Paul Root Wolpe set the stage for this discussion with their article in Nature Reviews Neuroscience (May 2004) on “Neurocognitive enhancement: what can we do and what should we do.” More recently, Hank Greely et al.’s Commentary piece in Nature (December 7, 2008) “Towards responsible use of cognitive-enhancing drugs by the healthy” provided the immediate stimulus for the Ethics Center’s program. After this event, a very interesting article by Margaret Talbot appeared in The New Yorker (April 27, 2009) on “BRAIN GAIN: The underground world of ‘neuroenhancing’ drugs.” It is available online at http://www.newyorker.com/article/reporting/2009/04/27/090427fa_fact_talbot.

Talbot was interviewed on Terri Gross’s “Fresh Air” on April 20, and audio of that show is available at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103274576 and as a podcast on iTunes.

Dr. Lawrence M. Hinman (Loyola University of Chicago, 1975) is professor of philosophy, Director of the Values Institute, and Co-director of the Center for Ethics in Science & Technology. His main areas of interest are ethical theory and ethical issues arising from recent developments in science and technology, especially in stem cell research, neuroscience, and computing and information technology. He regularly teaches Ethical Theory and Social Ethics. In addition, he teaches courses on computer ethics and on ethical issues at the frontiers of science. He is currently writing on an anthology on ethical issues in stem cell research (Humana Press).
The 3rd US/Canada Region International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) School of Neuroscience will be held in Vancouver, Canada from May 29 to June 4, 2009 and focuses on Neural Degeneration and Regeneration. The School offers students from Africa, Asia and Latin America advanced neuroscience courses taught by local and foreign experts. This year, like last, neuroethics will be part of the curriculum.

We are pleased to announce that the National Core for Neuroethics at the University of British Columbia, in collaboration with the Neuroethics Society and its International Neuroethics Network, will be sponsoring Dr. George M. Wanderi from Kenya to attend the IBRO School. Dr. Wanderi is a medical doctor whose work focuses on adenoviral and adeno-associated vector gene therapy to treat malignant brain tumors, Parkinsonism, Cystic Fibrosis and HIV encephalitis. Dr. Wanderi is interested in understanding neuroethics and policy related issues and, in particular, he seeks to explore the promise and limitations of new therapies as they are applied and regulated in North America and other parts of the world.

For more information on IBRO visit: http://www.ibro.info/Pub/Pub_Front.asp

The “Neuroethics of Addiction” workshop was held this past April 14, 2009 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Dr. Anthony Phillips, Scientific Director of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research - Institute on Neuroscience, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA), Dr. Michale Krauz, the LEEF Leadership chair in Addiction Research and Dr. Wayne Hall from the University of Queensland gave plenary lectures on addiction as a brain disease, treatment of addiction, and the risks and benefits of relying on neurobiological explanations of addiction. Following the lectures, a panel discussion on “Neuroethics of Addiction: From the Laboratory to the Street” chaired by Dr. Lorraine Greaves focused on safe injection facilities such as Vancouver’s Insite, the only such site in North America. Russ Maynard from Insite and Thomas Kerr from UBC commented on their experiences setting up, running and evaluating the controversial facility located in the heart of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Members of the National Core for Neuroethics at UBC blogged about the workshop and invite you to comment on them at http://neuroethicscanada.wordpress.com/.

If you have any questions or comments please visit the INN website at www.neuroethics.ubc.ca/INN or contact Sofia Lombera at slombera@neuroethics.ubc.ca.

Major Updates Planned for Website
A series of major updates are being finalized on our website. For almost three years, we have been using the same website at http://www.neuroethicsociety.org. Soon, all that will change. You will find:

- Cleaner, more accessible layout for the overall site
- Easier membership sign-up and renewal, with less forms to fill out and clearer instructions
- Option for automatic renewal of membership dues on your credit card. (Note—this will only be for people who express an interest in it. You will not be charged for anything with your permission.)
- Improved member directory with easier data searching and analysis
- Simplified process for communicating with the administrative, especially before big events like the 2010 conference.
Our mission is to promote the development and responsible application of neuroscience through interdisciplinary and international research, education, outreach and public engagement for the benefit of people of all nations, ethnicities, and cultures.