

## NIMH Director to Shed Light on Basic Mechanisms of Complex Human Behaviors

*Talk at Salk Institute Could Also Prove Useful to Explain Autism and Schizophrenia*

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Inga Kiderra

Is it possible for scientists to decipher and explain complex social human behaviors such as aggression, attachment and parental care at their cellular and molecular level? One answer may lie in a family of neuropeptides that, recent studies show, could also prove useful to better understand disorders of social deficits, including autism and schizophrenia.

Thomas Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), will review more than two decades of research focusing on oxytocin and vasopressin, neuropeptides that provide a window into basic mechanisms for social behaviors.

His May 8 presentation, titled "Social Neuroscience: Toward a New Basic Science for Psychiatry," will take place from 4 to 5 p.m. in the Frederic de Hoffman Auditorium at the Salk Institute, which co-hosts the event with UC San Diego's Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind.

As director of the NIMH, a component of the National Institutes of Health, Insel oversees the agency that is charged with generating the knowledge needed to understand, treat and prevent mental disorders. With a budget of more than \$1.4 billion, the NIMH leads the nation's research on disorders that affect an estimated 44 million Americans, including one in five children.

Prior to his career at the NIMH, Insel was professor of psychiatry at Emory University, where he was founding director of the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience, one of the largest science and technology centers, and concurrently served as director of a National Institutes of Health-funded Center for Autism Research.

Insel has conducted clinical research on obsessive-compulsive disorder, including some of the first treatment trials for OCD, and has published more than 200 scientific articles and four books, including the "Neurobiology of Parental Care" (with Michael Numan) in 2003.

Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served at a reception immediately following the presentation.

**About the Salk Institute:** The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to fundamental discoveries in the life sciences, the improvement of human health and the training of future generations of researchers. Jonas Salk, M.D., whose polio vaccine all but eradicated the crippling disease poliomyelitis in 1955, opened the Institute in 1965 with a gift of land from the City of San Diego and the financial support of the March of Dimes.

**About the Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind at UC San Diego :** The Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind at UC San Diego, which integrates knowledge from all disciplines that deal with the nature of the brain and mind, was founded in 2004 with a gift from physicist Fred Kavli and the Kavli Foundation. KIBM's mission is to support

research that furthers our understanding of the origins, evolution and mechanisms of human cognition, from the brain's physical and biochemical machinery to the experiences and behaviors called the mind.

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Joint Salk/KIBM Distinguished Lecture

**Thomas Insel, M.D.**  
Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

**Social Neuroscience:  
Toward a New Basic Science for Psychiatry**

Thursday May 8th, 4:00 PM  
Frederic de Hoffman Auditorium, Salk Institute

**KAVLI** FOUNDATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE  
**SALK INSTITUTE** FOR BIOLOGICAL STUDIES

Open reception immediately following with hours of courses.  
Free parking will be available in the Salk overflow lot.  
Information: [www.salk.edu/news](http://www.salk.edu/news)