

July 23, 2013

Thomas R. Insel, M.D.
Director, National Institute of Mental Health
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Dear Dr. Insel:

The Inter Organizational Practice Committee (IOPC) is a committee of representatives of the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN), Division 40 of the American Psychological Association (APA), the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN), and the American Board of Professional Neuropsychology (ABN), tasked with coordinating advocacy efforts between several of the major neuropsychology professional organizations, representing thousands of neuropsychologists in the United States. We are writing to express our support for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) project. The RDoC project's goal of "attempting to create a new kind of taxonomy for mental disorders" recognizes the difficulty translating research to effective treatment of mental disorders and offers an innovative and promising new system for addressing mental illness in research.

We appreciate your efforts to address this difficulty by removing the constraints of a syndrome-based approach to mental health research, instead using behavioral neuroscience to inform diagnosis and treatment. We also appreciate your acknowledgment of the contribution of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and that the NIMH's efforts will take time before they are translated into clinical practice.

IOPC member programs are non-profit professional associations for neuropsychologists, experts in the study, assessment and treatment of brain injuries and disorders, including mental disorders, across the lifespan. Our members work in the most prestigious universities, hospitals and private practices throughout the world and are at the forefront of cutting-edge research and rehabilitation in the field of brain-behavior relationships. Our scientists and clinicians (some of whom participated in the RDoC workshop proceedings and many of whom receive NIMH or other federal funding) undertake a range of research that includes, among many other topics, the study of cognitive deficits in mental disorders.

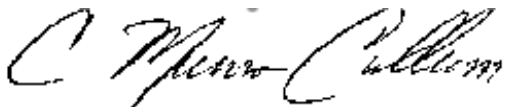
The cognitive systems construct is a clear area of expertise for IOPC program members; in fact, the RDoC description identifies "patients who score more than one standard deviation below the mean on a cognitive task" as a proposed method of inclusion in studies using the RDoC.

Neuropsychologists routinely administer and interpret cognitive testing and are perfectly suited to assist in developing this construct. Our members also undertake a range of research that includes, among many other topics, the study of individual neurons, cutting-edge imaging techniques, and social aspects of behavior.

For these reasons, we would like to make available a working group of our members who would be available to consult with the National Advisory Mental Health Council in areas where we can share our expertise regarding assessment of cognitive systems, and how development and function of various brain systems relate to mental health. We would be glad to meet with you at your convenience to discuss this proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact Heather Santos, Director of Operations, National Academy of Neuropsychology at 7555 East Hampden Avenue, Suite 525 Denver, Colorado 80231, phone: 303-691-3694, fax: 303-691-5983, email: hsantos@nanonline.org, if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully submitted,



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