

Brain Medicine

Table of Contents

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EDITORIAL

Exercise as metabolic medicine: Movement counters diet-induced behavioral despair via gut-brain signaling <i>Julio Licinio, Ma-Li Wong and Nicholas Fabiano</i>	1
--	---

INNOVATORS & IDEAS: RISING STAR

Hamilton Oh: A journey studying the science of humanity <i>Hamilton Se-Hwee Oh</i>	5
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INNOVATORS & IDEAS: RESEARCH LEADERS

Illana Gozes: From the pivotal discovery of activity-dependent neuroprotective protein (ADNP) through its investigational drug davunetide: brain molecular medicine providing hope for autism, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer's disease <i>Illana Gozes</i>	9
---	---

Ana Cristina Andreazza: Driven by curiosity – transforming mental health through mitochondrial innovation <i>Ana C. Andreazza</i>	13
--	----

Inga D. Neumann: Molecular underpinnings of the brain oxytocin system and its involvement in socio-emotional behaviour: More than a love story <i>Inga D. Neumann</i>	17
---	----

Michael C. Oldham: Clarifying the cellular and molecular architecture of the human brain in health and disease through gene coexpression analysis <i>Michael C. Oldham</i>	21
--	----

INNOVATORS & IDEAS: ACADEMIC LEADER

John M. Oldham: Personality styles and personality disorders, a dimensional framework <i>John M. Oldham</i>	26
--	----

Siegfried Kasper: The importance of back-translation of clinical findings to basic science <i>Siegfried Kasper</i>	30
---	----

MINI-REVIEW

Neuromodulation techniques in obsessive-compulsive disorder: Current state of the art <i>Kevin Swierkosz-Lenart, Carolina Viegas ... Luc Mallet</i>	34
--	----

THOUGHT LEADERS INVITED REVIEW

Rethinking the impact and management of electroconvulsive therapy session number in depression <i>Yang Ji, Hao Zheng ... Yanghua Tian</i>	42
--	----

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exercise mitigates the effects of a cafeteria diet on antidepressant-like behavior associated with plasma and microbial metabolites in adult male rats <i>Minke H.C. Nota, Sarah Nicolas ... Yvonne M. Nolan</i>	52
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Cover Art

Cover Image: Exercise counters cafeteria diet-induced behavioral despair through metabolic and gut-brain mechanisms. This issue's cover illustrates the interplay between diet, exercise, and mental health investigated by Nota and colleagues. In adult male rats, voluntary wheel running mitigated the increase in immobility (a depression-like behavior) induced by a Western-style cafeteria diet high in saturated fat and sugar. Exercise also exerted modest anxiolytic effects and improvements in spatial learning independent of diet. The antidepressant-like effects of exercise in cafeteria diet-fed rats were accompanied by attenuation of diet-induced increases in plasma insulin and leptin, and restoration of caecal metabolites including anserine, indole-3-carboxylate, and deoxyinosine. Exercise increased circulating GLP-1 and promoted adult hippocampal neurogenesis in chow-fed animals; however, both effects were blunted in rats exposed to the cafeteria diet. Correlation analyses revealed associations between specific caecal metabolites and depression- and cognition-related behaviors, independent of diet and exercise. These findings provide insight into metabolic hormone and gut-derived metabolite mechanisms underlying the effects of cafeteria diet and exercise on brain and behavior, with implications for the microbiota-gut-brain axis in mood disorders. Cover image adapted from research by Nota et al. (pages [52–66]) and discussed in the accompanying editorial by Licinio et al. (pages [1–4]).

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