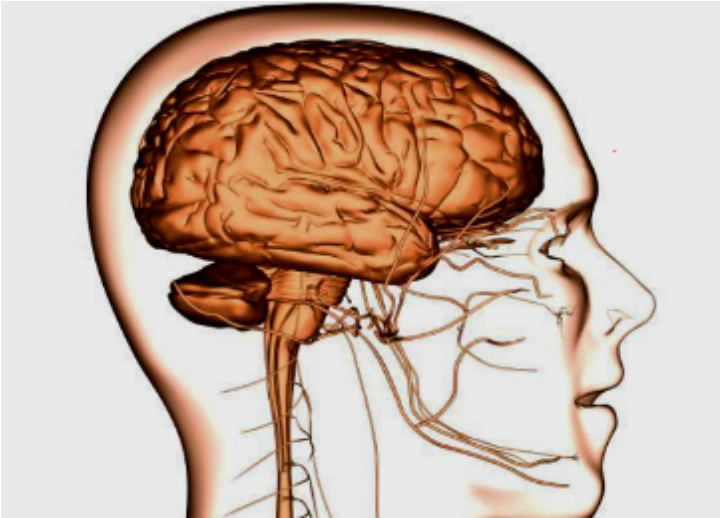


New UK-India initiative to tackle brain disorders

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Brain disorders such as autism and dementia could be better understood thanks to an international partnership that will research the conditions.

Scientists from the University of Edinburgh and the Institute of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine (inStem) in Bangalore are to form a new centre to study disabilities that arise from alterations in brain development.

Autism spectrum disorders and intellectual disabilities will be the initial focus of the Centre for Brain Development and Repair, which will be based in Bangalore.

In the longer term, the centre will train scientists to tackle major neurological disorders such as dementia, which can critically undermine quality of life and represents a growing and major public health threat in India.

The collaboration will be supported by the Indian Department of Biotechnology and will involve visiting professors from Edinburgh and Indian scientists working on joint projects in Bangalore and Edinburgh.

Dr Shona Chattarji, Professor of Neurobiology at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore and the director of Centre for Brain Development and Repair said, "This Centre is a milestone in UK-India bioscience partnering. It represents a transformative collaborative programme that brings together world-class expertise in several scientific disciplines. This is crucial if we are to understand autism spectrum disorders and intellectual disabilities better."

The launch of the centre comes after two years of collaborative work between inStem, the NCBS and the University of Edinburgh. This has resulted in inStem developing new approaches to understanding brain development disorders.

Dr Siddarthan Chandran, Professor of Neurology and Director of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, said: "Not only will this centre focus on the common psychiatric and neurological diseases that cause a major burden for patients in both India and the UK, but it will also train the next generation of scientists who will take forward laboratory discoveries to the clinic."