Matthew State awarded Sarnat Prize for Mental Health Research

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By Nina Bai | Originally published on UCSF News

Matthew State, MD, PhD, Oberndorf Family Distinguished Professor and chair of psychiatry, director of the Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute, and member of the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, is one of three recipients of the 2017 Rhoda and Bernard Sarnat International Prize in Mental Health given by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM).

The other winners are Catherine Lord, PhD, director of the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain at Weill Cornell Medicine and Joseph Coyle, MD, Eben S. Draper Professor of Psychiatry and Neuroscience at Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital.

Since 1992, the Sarnat Prize has recognized individuals or groups that have demonstrated outstanding achievement in improving mental health, through fields such as neuroscience, psychology, social work, nursing, psychiatry, and advocacy. Nominations for potential recipients are solicited from Academy members, deans of medical schools, and mental health
State is a child psychiatrist and geneticist studying pediatric neuropsychiatric syndromes with a focus on autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and Tourette syndrome. This year’s Sarnat Prize highlights his work on the Simons Simplex Collection (SSC), a cohort of nearly 3,000 families that transformed autism genetics. Beginning in 2007, State led a consortium of a dozen laboratories from across the U.S. and Canada that made seminal discoveries regarding the role of spontaneous (de novo) mutations to ASD. His collaborator, Lord, led the multi-site clinical research effort that established the SSC cohort, which has become a leading international biorepository and data resource for the study of ASD.

Over the last decade, State’s lab has identified dozens of genes and small chromosomal abnormalities, called copy number variations, that carry large risks for autism. Among his most notable discoveries has been the contribution of rare spontaneous autism-related mutations in the gene SCN2A and the finding that additional copies of the chromosomal region, 7q11.23, lead to ASD. His laboratory has also been a leader in leveraging the understanding of autism genetics to clarify the neurobiology of the syndrome, finding that the genes identified by studies of the SSC point to a crucial role for the human prefrontal cortex during mid-fetal development.

“Through their pioneering research and clinical work, Joseph Coyle, Catherine Lord, and Matthew State have made profound contributions to the understanding of a range of serious neuropsychiatric disorders,” NAM President Victor J. Dzau said in a statement.

The National Academy of Medicine, established in 1970 as the Institute of Medicine, is an independent organization of eminent professionals from diverse fields including health and medicine; the natural, social, and behavioral sciences; and beyond. It serves alongside the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering as an adviser to the national and the international community.

Further coverage

- National Academy of Medicine: Joseph Coyle, Catherine Lord, and Matthew State receive National Academy of Medicine’s Sarnat Award for Outstanding Achievements in Improving Mental Health [5]

About UCSF Psychiatry

The UCSF Department of Psychiatry [6] and the Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute are among the nation’s foremost resources in the fields of child, adolescent, adult, and geriatric mental health. Together they constitute one of the largest departments in the UCSF School of Medicine and the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, with a mission focused on research (basic, translational, clinical), teaching, patient care, and public service.
UCSF Psychiatry conducts its clinical, educational and research efforts at a variety of locations in Northern California, including UCSF campuses at Parnassus Heights, Mission Bay and Laurel Heights, UCSF Medical Center, UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals, Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, the San Francisco VA Health Care System, and UCSF Fresno.

About the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences

The UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, established by the extraordinary generosity of Joan and Sanford I. "Sandy" Weill, brings together world-class researchers with top-ranked physicians to solve some of the most complex challenges in the human brain.

The UCSF Weill Institute leverages UCSF?s unrivaled bench-to-bedside excellence in the neurosciences. It unites three UCSF departments?Neurology, Psychiatry, and Neurological Surgery?that are highly esteemed for both patient care and research, as well as the Neuroscience Graduate Program, a cross-disciplinary alliance of nearly 100 UCSF faculty members from 15 basic-science departments, as well as the UCSF Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases, a multidisciplinary research center focused on finding effective treatments for Alzheimer?s disease, frontotemporal dementia, Parkinson?s disease, and other neurodegenerative disorders.

About UCSF

UC San Francisco (UCSF) is a leading university dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. It includes top-ranked graduate schools of dentistry, medicine, nursing and pharmacy; a graduate division with nationally renowned programs in basic, biomedical, translational and population sciences; and a preeminent biomedical research enterprise. It also includes UCSF Health, which comprises top-ranked hospitals ? UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children?s Hospitals in San Francisco and Oakland ? and other partner and affiliated hospitals and healthcare providers throughout the Bay Area.


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[1] https://www.ucsf.edu/bio/nina-bai
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