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Marie-Christine Pardon  
Mark W. Bondi  
Editors

# Behavioral Neurobiology of Aging

 Springer

Dr. Marie-Christine Pardon  
School of Biomedical Sciences  
Queen's Medical Centre  
University of Nottingham Medical School  
Nottingham NG7 2UH  
UK

Dr. Mark W. Bondi  
Division of Geriatric Psychiatry  
University of California, San Diego  
Gilman Drive 9500  
La Jolla CA 92093-0603  
USA

ISSN 1866-3370  
ISBN 978-3-642-23874-1  
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-23875-8  
Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

e-ISSN 1866-3389  
e-ISBN 978-3-642-23875-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012932741

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Printed on acid-free paper

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# Preface

Modern societies face the substantial economic and social challenge of an unprecedented increase in life expectancy, given the rise in chronic medical and systemic conditions associated with aging. In addition, the baby boom generation has begun to reach retirement age. The result of this expansion of the demographic make-up of our societies will be that, by 2025, one third of the population of developed countries will be aged over 60 years (10% worldwide)<sup>1</sup>. This surge will be associated with a particularly rapid increase in the number of older adults aged 80 years and older and accompanied by increases in the prevalence of age-related disorders as well. For example, the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease worldwide was about 26 million in 2006 and is expected to quadruple to more than 106 million by 2050.

Public health perspectives aside, people do not want to simply live longer; they want to age successfully and remain physically and mentally active in their later years. Improving the quality of life in our later years must start by understanding when and how functional declines of the central nervous system occur. Major advances in our understanding of brain aging and, in particular, the distinction between normal and pathological aging are therefore required before suitable preventive and curative strategies can be developed. In this volume we present the current state of research findings related to healthy brain and cognitive aging by integrating contributions from leading authorities on human clinical studies and translational research in animal models. The goals of such cross-disciplinary coverage are to lessen compartmentalization within one's own discipline, encourage communication across basic and clinical science areas, generate seedbeds of hypothesis generation, and ultimately maximize the potential for seamless translation of discoveries to clinical application.

In the opening chapter of this volume, Drs. Hayden and Welsh-Bohmer provide an overview of the determinants of cognitive aging and dementia. Their epidemiologic study and analysis is followed by several chapters describing age-related

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, [http://www.who.int/whr/1998/media\\_centre/50facts/en/](http://www.who.int/whr/1998/media_centre/50facts/en/).

changes in cognition and emotion. Dr. Depp and colleagues review the definition and biological, psychological, and environmental determinants of successful cognitive aging while Drs. Kaszniak and Menchola provide a comprehensive overview of the behavioral neuroscience of emotion and creativity in human aging. Dr. Marighetto and colleagues critically discuss the preclinical studies examining the impact of aging on memory systems and how they can be translated to humans.

Three subsequent chapters then explore changes in the brain that accompany normal aging. Dr. Guidotti-Breting and colleagues give a thorough overview of advances in our understanding of normal aging achieved through the use of functional neuroimaging as well as important avenues for future research while Drs. Woodard and Sugarman offer insights into how such functional neuroimaging techniques can allow for the differentiation between normal aging and dementia and help predict cognitive decline. Then, Drs. Juraska and Lowry provide a detailed analysis of the neuroanatomical changes in the brain associated with age-related cognitive decline at the level of neuronal loss, white matter and synaptic changes, by integrating data from neuroimaging and stereological studies in human, nonhuman primates and rodents. They conclude by examining whether the course of neuroanatomical aging can be altered by hormone replacement in females. In the next chapter, Dr. Boulware and colleagues review studies in the same species that examine the effects of reproductive aging and hormone replacement on cognitive functions mediated by the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex.

The next series of chapters cover medical and psychiatric conditions that can negatively impact cognition in late life. This section starts with Dr. Salmon's examination of Mild Cognitive Impairment, a clinical condition characterized by significant cognitive impairment in the absence of dementia, but which frequently progresses to dementia. Then, Dr. Seidel and colleagues and Dr. Wijeratne, and colleagues highlight how functional consequences of cerebrovascular changes or psychiatric conditions in older adults exacerbate cognitive decline, respectively.

The closing chapters of this volume are devoted to an exploration of strategies to diminish and delay age-related cognitive declines, both pharmacologically and non-pharmacologically. Dr. Jak provides a critical summary of the ever-growing body of research focusing on participation in physical and cognitive activities among older adults and their impact on cognition, the brain, and cognitive aging outcomes. Drs. Redolat and Mesa-Gresa critically discuss preclinical work addressing the potential impact of physical exercise on cognition in aged rodents. Then, Dr. Kinsley and colleagues provide an overview of how reproductive experience delays the aging process in rats. Finally, Dr. Corey-Bloom presents an overview of the clinical trials for mild cognitive impairment, their limitations as well as the potential strategies for overcoming the identified problems in future trials.

This volume provides topics that will be useful to researchers, clinicians and students interested in the current knowledge and research challenges in neurobiological perspectives in aging as well as future research directions in aging research.

## **Reference**

Brookmeyer R, Johnson E, Ziegler-Graham K, Arrighi HM (2007) Forecasting the global burden of Alzheimer's disease. *Alzheimer's Dementia* 3(3):186–91

Nottingham, La Jolla

Marie-Christine Pardon  
Mark W. Bondi

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# Contributors

**Marissa I. Boulware** Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2441 E. Hartford Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53211, USA

**Laurent Brayda-Bruno** Neurocentre Magendie-Inserm U862, 146 Rue Leo Saignat, Bordeaux-Cedex 33077, France

**Jody Corey-Bloom** Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer Disease Research Center, University of California, San Diego, 8950 Villa La Jolla Drive (Suite C129), La Jolla, CA 92037, USA, e-mail: jcoreybloom@ucsd.edu

**Colin A. Depp** Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging, San Diego, CA, USA; Department of Psychiatry, University of California, San Diego, CA, USA, e-mail: cdepp@ucsd.edu

**B. Draper** School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

**S. Duke Han** Department of Behavioral Sciences, Rush University Medical Center, 1653 W. Congress Parkway, Chicago, IL 60612-3244, USA, e-mail: Duke\_Han@rush.edu

**Nicole Etchamendy** NutriNeuro Bordeaux University, avenue des facultés, 33406 Talence, France

**R. Adam Franssen** Department of Biology, Longwood University, Farmville, VA, USA

**Karyn M. Frick** Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2441 E. Hartford Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53211, USA, e-mail: frickk@uwm.edu

**Tania Giovannetti** Department of Psychology, Temple University, Philadelphia PA, USA, e-mail: tgio@temple.edu

**Leslie M. Guidotti Breting** Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, NorthShore University HealthSystem, Evanston, IL, USA

**Alexandria Harmell** Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego, CA, USA

**Kathleen M. Hayden** Department of Psychiatry, Joseph and Kathleen Bryan Alzheimer's Disease Research; Center—Division of Neurology, 2200 W. Main Street, Suite A200, Durham, NC 27705, USA

**Amy J. Jak** Department of Psychology Service, Veteran's Affairs San Diego Healthcare System, San Diego, CA, USA; Department of Psychiatry School of Medicine, University of California, San Diego, CA, USA, e-mail: ajak@ucsd.edu

**Janice M. Juraska** Department of Psychology and Program in Neuroscience, University of Illinois, 603 E Daniel, Champaign, IL 61820, USA, e-mail: jjuraska@illinois.edu

**Alfred W. Kaszniak** Department of Psychology, University of Arizona, 1503 E. University, Tucson, AZ 85721, USA, e-mail: kaszniak@email.arizona.edu

**Brianne A. Kent** Department of Psychology, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520, USA

**Craig Howard Kinsley** Department of Psychology, Center for Neuroscience, Gottwald Science Center and 116 Richmond Hall, University of Richmond, B-326/328, 28 Westhampton Way, Richmond, VA 23173, USA, e-mail: ckinsley@richmond.edu

**David J. Libon** Department of Neurology, Drexel University College of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, USA, e-mail: David.Libon@drexelmed.edu

**Nioka C. Lowry** Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, 603 E Daniel, Champaign, IL 61820, USA, e-mail: nchisho2@illinois.edu

**Aline Marighetto** Neurocentre Magendie-Inserm U862, 146 Rue Leo Saignat, Bordeaux-Cedex 33077, France, e-mail: a.marighetto@cnic.u-bordeaux1.fr

**Marisa Menchola** Department of Psychology, University of Arizona, 1503 E. University, Tucson, AZ 85721, USA; Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Arizona, 1450 N Cherry, Tucson, AZ 85719, USA

**Patricia Mesa-Gresa** Departamento de Psicobiología, Universitat de València, Blasco Ibáñez 21, 46010 Valencia, Spain, e-mail: Patricia.mesa@uv.es

**Elizabeth Amory Meyer** Department of Psychology, Center for Neuroscience, Gottwald Science Center and 116 Richmond Hall, University of Richmond, B-326/328, 28 Westhampton Way, Richmond, VA 23173, USA

**Rosa Redolat** Departamento de Psicobiología, Universitat de València, Blasco Ibáñez 21, 46010 Valencia, Spain, e-mail: Rosa.redolat@uv.es

**S. Reutens** School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

**P. Sachdev** School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia, e-mail: p.sachdev@unsw.edu.au

**David P. Salmon** Department of Neurosciences (0948), University of California, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0948, USA, e-mail: dsalmon@ucsd.edu

**Gregory A. Seidel** Department of Psychology, Temple University, Philadelphia PA, USA, e-mail: gregory.seidel@temple.edu

**Michael A. Sugarman** Department of Psychology, Wayne State University, 5057 Woodward Ave., 7th Floor, Detroit, MI 48202, USA, e-mail: msugarman5@gmail.com

**Elizabeth R. Tuminello** Department of Psychology, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

**Ipsit V. Vahia** Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging, San Diego, CA, USA; Department of Psychiatry, University of California, San Diego, CA, USA

**Kathleen A. Welsh-Bohmer** Department of Psychiatry, Joseph and Kathleen Bryan Alzheimer's Disease Research; Center—Division of Neurology, 2200 W. Main Street, Suite A200, Durham, NC 27705, USA, e-mail: Kathleen.WelshBohmer@duke.edu

**C. Wijeratne** School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

**John L. Woodard** Department of Psychology, Wayne State University, 5057 Woodward Ave., 7th Floor, Detroit, MI 48202, USA, e-mail: john.woodard@wayne.edu