

Charles O'Brien, MD, PhD



Professor and Director

Charles P. O'Brien, a native of New Orleans, earned M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Tulane University. He received residency training at Harvard, Tulane, University of London, and University of Pennsylvania in internal medicine, neurology and psychiatry and became board certified in neurology, psychiatry and addiction psychiatry. Despite a large clinical responsibility as Chief of Psychiatry at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center, he was able to establish and direct a clinical research program that has had a major impact on the treatment of addictive disorders. His research group has been responsible for numerous discoveries described in over 500 publications that have elucidated basic information on the nature of addiction and improved the results of treatment for addictive disorders. His work involves the discovery of brain changes created during addiction that persist and later can produce relapse to compulsive drug taking. His team discovered medications for the prevention of relapse, developed instruments for measuring the severity of addictive disorders and conducted trials on behavioral treatments combined with medication to prevent relapse. He led the discovery of the effects of alcohol on the endogenous opioid system and developed a completely new treatment for alcoholism. Many of his discoveries are now utilized in common practice for the treatment of addictive disorders throughout the world.

O'Brien was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in 1991 and he has received numerous research and teaching awards as well as an honorary doctorate from the University of Bordeaux in 1994, the Nathan B. Eddy award for research on addiction from the College on Problems of Drug Dependence in 2003, the APA Research Award in 2000 and the 2010 Gold Medal for Research from the Society on Biological Psychiatry. In 2010 he received the Sarnat International Prize for Mental Health from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science and in 2012 the Jellinek international award for alcoholism research and the Isaacson Award for Alcoholism research. In 2013 he was named Chevalier (knight) of the Legion of Honor by the government of France for his achievements in the science of addiction and his contributions to French-American research collaborations. In 2015 O'Brien received the Lifetime Research Award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. He has been an adviser on drug policy to local and national governments since the 1970s and has chaired or served as member of numerous Institute of Medicine committees dealing with science and drug abuse policy matters. From 2007-13 he served as chair of the substance use disorders committee for DSM-5, the revised classification of mental illness. O'Brien is past president of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology and the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease.



Lohocla
Research
Corporation