

# Linda Watkins, PhD



Professor

Linda Watkins is a Professor in the Department of Psychology, a University of Colorado President's Teaching Scholar, and the Director of the Interdepartmental Neuroscience Ph.D. Program. She received her Ph.D. in Physiology from the Medical College of Virginia in 1980 and has been at the University of Colorado-Boulder since 1988. She has received career awards from the National Institute of Health and National Institute for Mental Health and numerous research grants from the National Institute for Mental Health, National Institute for Neurological Diseases and Stroke, and National Institute for Drug Abuse. She has authored or co-authored over 190 book chapters, review articles and journal articles.

Dr. Watkins' research focuses on three inter-related areas. Her primary research interest is understanding how to control clinically relevant pathological pain states. Her group's research points to a novel reason that clinical pain has been impossible to successfully control. That is, pathological pain is being created and maintained by a surprising cell type, namely glia. These cells, upon activation, dysregulate normal pain processing by the spinal cord neurons. The aim of this research is to both understand how glia dysregulate neuronal function and, ultimately, to develop clinically relevant means to control such pain states. Toward this end, pharmacological, molecular biological, behavioral, anatomical, and gene therapy studies are performed. The second research area of interest is in understanding the role of central nervous system proinflammatory cytokines in pain, learning and memory, and various brain-mediated responses that are created in response to infection/inflammation in the body (so-called "sickness responses"). The third research area focuses on understanding the impact that perception of control vs. perception of lack of control has on physiology and neurochemistry of the organism.



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