



Seminar

Neuroendocrine measures and social science research. Guidelines for effective use

by

Prof. Phil Evans

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University of Westminster, London, UK

Date : 19 May 2017 (Friday)
Time : 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm
Venue : Room Y7302, SS Multi-function Room
Academic 1, City University of Hong Kong
Language : English

Abstract

Cortisol, the neuroendocrine stress hormone measurable in saliva, is our principle focus, and can be seen as providing a ‘window’ into the mind and brain. It can be studied in two main ways, examination of people’s responses to external challenge and examination of basal circadian patterns. These can inform aspects of acute and chronic stress and potential impact on mental and physical health. Cortisol effects are driven by differences in the perception of threat. For psychologists, health professionals, and social scientists more generally this provides an interesting avenue for a diversity of multi-disciplinary projects where cortisol biomeasures may provide useful illumination of constructs which might mediate stressful reactions, such as social support, loneliness, resilience, and of course underlying macro-level demographic modulators and mediators.

This seminar will provide a background to understanding the regulation and function of cortisol, and issues arising in relation to its measurement. It will discuss and makes recommendations on the use of appropriate cortisol measures in the study of both acute and chronic stress. Used and interpreted appropriately, stress reactivity and basal ambulatory measures of salivary cortisol can provide a valuable addition to self-report and observation in social science research.

Biographical Sketch

Prof. Phil Evans graduated from the University of Cambridge in psychology and and got his PhD from Cardiff in clinical behavioural therapy. In 1990, he moved to Westminster University to co-found the Psychophysiology and Stress Research Group with two close colleagues. The group is now an internationally recognized centre for psychobiology research using salivary bio-measures. Current research projects includes a focus on cognition, emotion, and neuroplasticity in older age and associations with the diurnal cortisol cycle, and cortisol as a biomarker in the evaluation of cognitive-behavioural interventions, such as mindfulness. Phil is also a leading advocate for advancing methodology and the use of statistical modelling techniques in psychophysiological research. He has held visiting professor posts at SUNY Stonybrook, USA, University of Hong Kong, City University of Hong Kong and UIB Spain, is a Fellow of the International Organization of Psychophysiology, and for many years editorial board member of its International Journal of Psychophysiology. Phil is the author of four books, several book chapters, and over 100 peer reviewed papers. He is currently a very active Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Westminster.

All Are Welcome