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Psychoneurointrocrinology: The mind-brain continuum

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Andrew Rubman and Susan Gordon explain the interdisciplinary construct psychoneurointracrine, which represents a complex system that is psychological, neurological and intracrinological forming a mind-brain continuum within the person. Psycho (psychological) refers to constructs variously referred to as psyche, self, soul, mind and consciousness. Neuro (neurological) refers to the composition of and reactions within the nervous system. Intracrine (intracrinological) refers to the biosynthesis of steroids; the intracellular binding of receptors and the formation of enzymes that catalyze the creation of hormones within the cell. The theory of psychoneurointracrine autopoiesis explains how the regulation of a steroid's receptor is modulated by the person's perception of experience and sense of well-being. The theory of emergent global states explains how reciprocal limbic projections from the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal and adrenal axes (HPG-HPA) originating at the paraventricular nucleus, terminating at the median eminence, govern the reactive and anticipatory response to stress. It is argued that the sense of well-being is embodied at the HPG-HPA axes, which integrates autonomic, pre-reflective and subliminal experience in the development of meaning and the emergence of self. This presentation explores: 1) the autopoietic role of estrogens, progesterone and DHEA in the ovary, adrenal gland and the brain, 2) the corticolimbic system in the development of emotion, 3) the theories of psychoneurointracrine autopoiesis and emergent global states and 4) the clinical implication of these theories for the assessment and treatment of women across the lifespan using natural psychopharmacology. The psychoneurointracrine model extends knowledge of the mind-brain relationship and the growth-oriented dimension of personality.

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