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Back to William James: The key role of body in Psychiatry

After several years during which psychiatry focused on the role of brain and cognitions in mental disorders recent experimental evidences point out the key role of body in mental disorders, in particular in anxiety and mood disorders. There are clear evidences relating panic disorder to respiratory, cardiovascular and balance system abnormalities that led to a respiratory theory of this disorder and to the development of respiratory therapies with evidences of a role of physical exercise in the wellbeing of these patients. Even in depression, whose impact in the health of world population is growing of importance, there are evidences of a role of immunologic and endocrine systems in its pathogenesis leading to a inflammatory theory of depression with recent experimental studies focusing on the role of anti-inflammatory agents in its treatment. It should be also mentioned that many psychotropic medications affect body, for example the anticoagulant effects of antidepressants are well known as well as cardiac and respiratory direct effect of medications used in the treatment of panic disorder. As well, evidences of an important interface between depression and cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases are emerging clearly. Finally the view of a key role of body in psychopathology, that find its roots in the ideas of William James, is also supported by data showing a central role of cortisol and the stress system in many different mental disorders.

Biography

Giampaolo Perna has completed his MD and PhD from Milan State University becoming psychiatrist in the same University. He is the chairman of the department of clinical neurosciences of Hermanas Hospitalarias - Villa San Benedetto Menni near Como Lake. He has published more than 100 papers in impacted journals. He is voluntary Professor at Leonard Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami and Associate Professor at Maastricht University. He is the chair of the WPA section on personalized psychiatry and member of the executive board of the Italian Association for Behavior Analysis and Modification and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AIAMC).

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