Neural Stem Cell Scientist Joins Brain Institute and College of Medicine

Boca Raton, Fla. (August 1, 2018) – The university has strengthened its faculty expertise on neuroscience and aging with the recent start of Henriette van Praag, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Biomedical Science in the College of Medicine. A member of the FAU Brain Institute with a lab on the Jupiter campus, van Praag most recently served as head of the Neuroplasticity and Behavioral Unit at the National Institute on Aging.



Her research focuses on the structural and functional integration of adult born neurons into brain circuits and how adult neurogenesis impacts learning and memory.

“Dr. van Praag’s research provides a critical foundation for understanding the changes that occur in the adult brain through experience and healthy life-styles,” said Randy D. Blakely, Ph.D., executive director of the FAU Brain Institute. “Many are unaware that new neurons continue to be generated in the adult brain and she has provided clues as to the molecular factors that drive their birth and integration into brain circuits. It’s a fascinating line of research that has important implications for how we maintain our cognitive capacities across the lifespan.”

Her current research seeks to understand how factors released in the body during exercise can lead to the growth and refinement of brain circuits. van Praag is also studying how dietary and immune factors can modulate the differentiation of neural stem cells, and thereby impact mood and learning. Strongly committed to the training of young scientists, she was awarded an NIH MERIT Award in 2016 in recognition of her mentorship of women scientists.

“It is very exciting to be part of the FAU Brain Institute,” van Praag said. I look forward to new research opportunities and to training students that are interested in understanding how the nervous system works.”

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