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CTSN Faculty Receive NIMH Funding to study the role of oxytocin and vasopressin receptor in chimpanzee social cognition

*Center for Translational Social Neuroscience
Faculty Funding Highlights*

Website: <http://www.ctsn.emory.edu>



ATLANTA— CTSN faculty William Hopkins and Larry Young have received a National Institutes of Mental Health grant to study the role of the vasopressin and oxytocin receptors on individual differences in social cognition and the brain in chimpanzees. Previous studies have shown that a behaviorally relevant segment of the promoter region of the vasopressin receptor gene (AVPR1A) is deleted in some chimpanzees, which is an unusual pattern among nonhuman primates. In this new grant, the social cognition abilities and brain structures will be compared in chimpanzees with and without the deleted region. The contribution of genetic variation in the oxytocin receptor gene on social cognition will also be examined. An additional aim of the grant is to examine where vasopressin receptors are expressed in the brains of chimpanzees. Collectively, the studies aim to identify the role of the AVPR1a and oxytocin receptor genes on atypical social cognition, a key phenotype in a number of neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism.