

Joshua A. Gordon, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Institute of Mental Health



Dr. Gordon pursued a combined MD/PhD degree at the University of California, San Francisco. Medical school coursework in psychiatry and neuroscience convinced him that the greatest need, and greatest promise, for biomedical science was in these areas. During his Ph.D. thesis with Dr. Michael Stryker, Dr. Gordon pioneered the methods necessary to study brain plasticity in the mouse visual system.

Upon completion of the dual degree program at UCSF, Dr. Gordon went to Columbia University for his Psychiatry residency and research fellowship because of the breadth and depth of the research opportunities here. Working with Dr. Rene Hen, Dr. Gordon and colleagues studied the role of the hippocampus, a brain structure known to be important for memory, in emotional processes such as anxiety and depression. He joined the Columbia faculty in 2004 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry.

Dr. Gordon's research focuses on the analysis of neural activity in mice carrying mutations of relevance to psychiatric disease. His lab studies genetic models of these diseases from an integrative neuroscience perspective, focused on understanding how a given disease mutation leads to a behavioral phenotype across multiple levels of analysis. To this end, he employs a range of systems neuroscience techniques, including in vivo anesthetized and awake behaving recordings and optogenetics, which is the use of light to control neural activity. His work has direct relevance to schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and depression.

Dr. Gordon's work has been recognized by several prestigious awards, including the The Brain and Behavior Research Foundation – NARSAD Young Investigator Award, the Rising Star Award from the International Mental Health Research Organization, the A.E. Bennett Research Award from the Society of Biological Psychiatry, and the Daniel H. Efron Research Award from the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

In addition to his research, Dr. Gordon was an Associate Director of the Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute Adult Psychiatry Residency Program, where he directed the neuroscience curriculum and administered the research programs for residents. Dr. Gordon also maintained a general psychiatric practice, caring for patients who suffer from the illnesses he studied in the lab.

Dr. Gordon recently joined the National Institutes of Health and serves as the Director for the National Institute of Mental Health.