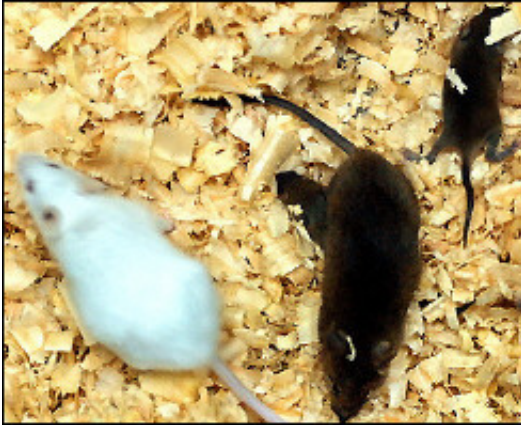


Mice Capable of Empathy

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A new study by McGill University professor of psychology Dr. Jeffrey Mogil shows that the capacity for empathy, previously suspected but unproven even among higher primates, is also evident in lower mammals.

In research published online June 29 in the journal *Science*, Professor Mogil, graduate student Dale Langford and their colleagues in the Pain Genetics Lab at McGill University discovered that mice that were co-housed (that is, familiar to each other) and able to see one another in pain were more sensitive to pain than those tested alone. The results, which for the first time show a form of "emotional contagion" between animals, shed light on how known social factors play a role in pain management.

The findings are not only unprecedented in what they tell us about animals, they may ultimately be relevant to understanding pain in humans. "Since we know that social interaction plays an important role in chronic pain behaviour in humans," Dr. Mogil said, "then the mechanism underlying such effects can now be elucidated; why are we so affected by those around us?"

Dr. Mogil, the E.P. Taylor Professor of Pain Studies at McGill, is a repatriated Canadian who was recruited in 2001 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he first identified sex-specific genetic circuitry that governs the way males and females respond to pain. Dr. Mogil generally explores the genetic and environmental influences that combine to govern reactions to pain. He holds the Canada Research Chair in the Genetics of Pain (Tier 1).

Source: McGill University

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