U.S. scientists say they have determined two different brain circuits might control the motivation to seek food and then consume it.

University of Missouri researchers using laboratory rats said they discovered deactivating the basolateral amygdala—a brain region involved in regulating emotion—specifically blocked consumption of a fatty diet. Surprisingly, it had no effect on the rats wanting to repeatedly look for food.

"It appears that two different brain circuits control the motivation to seek and consume," said Assistant Professor Matthew, who led the study. "Understanding how this ... works may provide insight into the exact networks and chemicals in our brain that determine the factors influencing our feeding habits."

The scientists said release of opioids—pleasure chemicals that can lead to euphoria—into the brain produces binge eating in non-hungry rats. Will and his team determined deactivating the basolateral amygdala blocked that type of binge eating but had no effect on feeding in rats that were simply deprived of food for 24 hours.

That discovery, Will said, suggests the basolateral amygdala is specifically involved in the overconsumption of food based on its palatability or pleasure driven by opioids, rather than the level of hunger.

The research was reported in the August issue of the journal Behavioral Neuroscience.
Survey ranks college towns

Columbia makes top 10 in group.

By Janese Heavin, Wednesday, September 9, 2009

Columbia is one of the best college towns in the United States, according to a new report.

The American Institute for Economic Research ranked the city ninth out of 20 communities of similar size. That’s down from eighth place in the 2007-08 report. The College Destinations Index ranks a total of 75 cities in four population categories, and Columbia is in the smallest population category — under 250,000.

TOP 10 COLLEGE TOWNS

1. Ithaca, N.Y.
3. Ames, Iowa
4. Champaign-Urbana, Ill.
5. Iowa City, Iowa
7. Corvallis, Ore.
8. Bloomington, Ind.
9. Columbia
10. College Station, Texas

Source: American Institute for Economic Research

The guide aims to help parents and future students narrow down college choices and to give campuses bragging rights.

The University of Missouri doesn’t put too much stock in rating systems, though, because criteria are always changing, spokesman Christian Basi said. This year’s report, for instance, is different from previous lists because the institute took over the project from another company.
"We’re always glad when we’re ranked positive, but at the same time the ranking criteria changes from year to year, so we don’t typically rely on or use these rankings," Basi said.

Still, it’s always nice to have outside researchers confirm what city officials already tout, Assistant City Manager Tony St. Romaine said. This report not only looks at academic opportunities but also off-campus amenities such as arts and leisure opportunities, accessibility and cost of living.

“That data is very important, and we do utilize it very frequently,” St. Romaine said. “One of the important things, especially on the community end of things, is to attract new businesses. Obviously, in order to continue and expand our job database, it’s critical for us to reach out to businesses that are interested in locating here.”

Outside affirmations of Columbia’s focus on the arts and culture also help keep students here after graduation and attract retirees, he said.

Stephens College will use the new report to recruit faculty members and tell prospective students about the town, spokeswoman Sara Fernández Cendón said.

“In addition to the strengths of our programs and our unique character as a place where women thrive,” she said, “we always make sure prospective students and faculty candidates know that Columbia is a great place to live.”

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Man-up on health care, President Obama

By Lewis Diuguid, Kansas City Star Editorial Board Columnist

In the words of the black community, President Barack Obama desperately needs to man-up in his drive for health-care reform. He has to give the most forceful, forthright speech of his young presidency to ensure that Congress delivers to him a bill that is worth signing into law.

Waffling won't work. Fancy, pretty rhetoric is a no-no, too. Trying to placate recalcitrant Republicans and so-called Blue Dog Democrats will just make Obama look flat-footed and ineffectual to real people.

What's clear are the basic questions that remain about health care reform. It struck me on Tuesday when I was lecturing at the world's oldest and best school of journalism - the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism.

Go through the who, what, where, when, why and how of good reporting. With health care reform, the nation has had a earful of who - nearly 50 million people without health insurance today in this country and still more who have insurance but are denied coverage for a number of reasons.

What: Health insurance has to be seen as a human right and not just something that only well-off people and folks with good lawyers can afford.

Where: That would be here in the United States, which lags other developed and some developing nations in providing health care for its people.

When: We still don't know the answer to this. People in the United States have been waiting for universal health care since then-President Teddy Roosevelt and several other occupants of the White House talked about it. But talk isn't enough anymore.

Why: A healthier population is a better, more productive and richer population able to achieve great things. The country could remain a superpower with universal health care. Without it, there is no floor to the depths that await.

How: That is the big question, which Obama needs to answer tonight. But first, he will have to man-up to do it.
The United States is moving to secure its own isotope supplies as soon as possible rather than continue what the country's nuclear experts are calling an "unhealthy" dependency on other countries and the whims of foreign governments.

This comes as Canadian doctors accuse a federal government experts' panel on isotopes of wasting time by focusing on hypothetical alternatives to the scarce radioactive material, rather than rolling out short-term solutions immediately - and providing funding to cash-strapped hospitals facing bills that could reach $20-million nationally.

The NRU reactor in Chalk River, Ont., normally supplies about a third of the world's supply of molybdenum-99, a medical isotope used in procedures ranging from cardiac imaging to bone scans. It has been off-line since May, when a heavy water leak was discovered. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., the Crown corporation that runs the reactor, has pushed back the estimated start date three times. AECL insists the reactor, now scheduled to start up in early 2010, will be functional again.

Others aren't so sure.

In a hearing Wednesday on plans to push forward the country's quest for a domestic isotope reactor, American nuclear experts decried the country's reliance on an increasingly precarious global supply chain of the radioactive material.

A bipartisan bill called the American Medical Isotope Production Act got its first reading in a subcommittee of the House of Representatives energy and commerce committee. It would dedicate $163-million (U.S.) to developing an isotope-producing reactor in the next five years. The bill states that it's "unclear" whether Canada's NRU will be able to resume production.

The current shortage, which has caused health-care providers to rework facility operations and in many cases cancel or postpone treatment, "is the result of an unhealthy dependency on reactors in other countries whose operational life expectancy is unpredictable," Steven Larson, chief of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center's nuclear medicine service, told the committee.

"To make matters worse, continued operation of these reactors depends on the willingness of foreign governments in Canada, Europe and South Africa ... to continue medical isotope production for the needs of our citizens."

Congressman Edward Markey, the committee chairman who put forward the bill, said in a statement that the United States is "facing a crisis in nuclear medicine."
"We are entirely dependent on a handful of foreign nuclear reactors, most of which are several decades old, some of which are literally falling apart."

The bill also places an imperative on developing reactors that produce isotopes using low-enriched uranium, considered a safer alternative to the more common high-enriched uranium, which can be used in nuclear weapons and is regarded as a security risk.

The two most likely candidates for such a reactor are the University of Missouri, which has a reactor capable of producing the necessary isotopes, but not processing them, and a partnership between isotope supplier Covidien and Babcock & Wilcox to build a U.S.-based isotope reactor over the next several years.

The U.S.'s move to produce its own medical isotopes isn't surprising, said Dominic Ryan, president of the Canadian Institute for Neutron Scattering, which does its research at Chalk River.

"The contrast between the U.S. and Canadian responses is not encouraging. They are actually committing money to doing something," he said, adding that it casts Canada's nuclear industry in a less than flattering light.

"Maybe it's just a recognition they can't depend on us. ... They're trying to scramble to build something to replace the supply that we've been providing for the last few decades because they think we're unreliable."

Dr. Ryan noted, however, that the addition of an American reactor wouldn't eliminate the need for Canadian isotopes.

"They don't have a reactor physically large enough to replace the NRU," he said. "The holes are still going to be there."

The federal government has emphasized the importance of Canada's nuclear industry. Natural Resources Minister Lisa Raitt is scheduled to give a talk on the topic in Toronto Friday.

In the meantime, Canadian health-care providers are calling for more assistance from the federal government in coping with the crisis. In a closed-door meeting of Ottawa's isotope expert panel yesterday, doctors lobbied for government support of immediate alternatives to traditional technetium imaging - procedures such as PET scans, doctors argue, are viable options, but far more expensive.

Norman Laurin, nuclear physician and vice-president of the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, said the expert panel seems to have made little progress.

"Let's just say my expectations are small at this point," he said. "I'd be more than happy to be corrected on that."

east one provincial health ministry have asked Ottawa for help footing the bill. The federal government has pointed out producers planned to increase isotope prices before the Chalk River reactor was shut down, but Dr. Laurin said those increases don't account for the extra costs hospitals are facing in staffing and operations to accommodate the shortage - not to mention imported isotopes, which decay during transport so hospitals end up with less than they pay for.
GUEST COMMENTARY: Questions surround cancellation of 'Pepper and Friends'

By Mel J. Zelenak
September 9, 2009 | 12:52 p.m. CDT

This letter includes observations and questions regarding the termination of "Pepper and Friends":

1. Why did KOMU and MU feel a need to fire — and publicly humiliate — 63-year-old Columbia icon Paul Pepper, who was only a year or two away from retirement anyway?

KOMU's current management style appears to be similar to what many of us in academia have experienced. A lower-level administrator, e.g. department chair, station manager, etc., makes an unwise decision that is supported ("rubber stamped") by others "up the line." The decision appears to be a good one, since the rationale supports only the administrator's views and no counterargument is offered or solicited by the upper level administrator(s).

The demise of Pepper & Friends and the insolvency at KOMU reminds me of the biblical interpretation (Life Applications Study Bible) of 2 Timothy 3-5; "they gather viewpoints to suit their selfish desires. Although they professed objectivity, their only defense for their viewpoints is that those viewpoints suit their desires."

2. Is the P&F $74,000 deficit as reported in a public relations statement issued by MU's news bureau accurate or misleading?

The statement ignored significant information to justify the termination of P&F. It did not mention that Paul Pepper offered to take a 50% pay cut and return to work part time (a savings of nearly $40,000). This omission, accounting for over half of the purported deficit, suggest there may be other claims that should be carefully scrutinized. I am puzzled about alleged financial losses because there has always been a waiting list for
P&F advertisers. I have never been able to obtain the coveted "sponsorship" status available on P&F.

Perhaps the management team did not create a strategy to acquire new advertising dollars — even at increased costs — something that I would have been willing to pay. Who is responsible for this lack of initiative?

3. Did the management team give any consideration to the goodwill generated by P&F—goodwill that benefits KOMU, MU, the Journalism School and its students?

I hope we can all agree that community service programs like P&F should not be held to the same monetary standards as national programming. Arguably, P&F continues to be the best community service program that KOMU airs. Can that be quantified? Can its losses be calculated, even if we accept the MU accounting?

4. The public relations statement mentioned that no funding from the university or the state is used to support KOMU. Why has the management team neglected to seek such support? Isn't that the responsibility of leadership in any organization? Is the real-life experience journalism majors covet—and acquire at KOMU—not touted by MU as a reason for journalism majors to attend this university? Is MU selling prospective students one thing—experience w/community programming—and offering them something else? Something less?

5. Will the increased local programming mentioned be in prime-time or will most simply substitute for infomercial time late at night or very early in the morning in order to satisfy FCC regulations? The Pet Corner was the only community program mentioned as part of this expansion. (Are they kidding?)

6. It appears that the management team made new facilities a priority and human capital of little importance. My observation is that morale at KOMU is at an all-time low. Visitors are greeted by an impersonal buzzer. For MU to imply that the current KOMU environment helps generate, educate and keep quality J-School students is naïve at best.

7. I respectfully ask why MU allowed the firing of very competent KOMU employees and yet keep the same managers responsible for the station's insolvency? The managers have been the decision-makers for a decade; they have alienated numerous advertisers, thousands of members of the community, alumni, etc.
I believe that there is a viable alternative to terminating the Pepper and Friends show. If we work together we can resolve the problem for all of us.

MU: I have offered examples of how to maintain P&F; you could come up with others. I have offered to call a meeting of all 122 Pepper and Friends advertisers to determine if we could increase our advertising contributions and/or find additional ways to save the program. There are thousands of Pepper & Friends supporters who protested the decision to terminate P&F by signing petitions, joining the “Save Pepper & Friends” Web site and attending various public events. They could be called upon to help support the continuation of the program.

If MU insists on terminating the program, its leaders could help P&F transition to another local television outlet that may not have adequate facilities to accommodate P&F, e.g. KMIZ, KRCG, etc. KOMU could offer its facilities at a discounted rate to other stations that truly support local programming. Surely, the antiquated/current P&F studio or the old shed that P&F most recently used would be available. All would benefit since the studio that picks up the show would be virtually guaranteed a strong advertising base and a community that would be indebted to them.

I am confident that through the cooperative efforts of the university, KOMU, the 122 P&F advertisers and thousands of P&F supporters, we can achieve our goal to celebrate and maintain this incredible and unique community service program, Pepper and Friends.

Mel J. Zelenak is the owner and manager of Affordable Cruises and Travel, LLC, in Columbia.