

The future of clinical neuroscience

Clinical & Translational Neuroscience
January-June 2018: 1
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DOI: 10.1177/2514183X18782469
journals.sagepub.com/home/ctn



Two prominent colleagues give us here their personal views of the future of clinical neuroscience: Yves Agid, MD, neurologist and PhD in neuropharmacology, was the long-term head of the renowned Neurology Department of the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital (Paris) and a founder and director of the new Brain and Spine Institute (ICM) on the Pitié-Salpêtrière campus. Christian Lüscher, MD/PhD, is a neuroscientist and clinician at the Neurology Department, University of Geneva. He is an internationally leading scientist in the field of addiction and its neurobiological basis. Interestingly, both their views “from the bedside” and “from the bench” converge on one central point: We need more scientifically trained clinicians and more clinically inspired scientists. The gap between the basic neuroscience labs, which are often animal model based, and the neurology or psychiatry clinics is still much too wide; languages, concepts, and priorities are often far apart. But a young generation of well-trained, “bilingual” clinician-scientists coming from programs like the

MD/PhD or the clinical-scientist curricula is ready to take the baton. We have to foster and take care of them, however, not bury them in clinical routine, and we have to honor the great personal efforts it takes them to follow two routes at the same time, to become an experienced clinician and to strive for excellence in science. And these programs need to be expanded, together with efforts that our universities currently start to make to better incorporate translational medicine into the education of life science and health scientists. The huge technological advances of the recent years will bring our understanding of nervous system functions and malfunctions to a new level, opening also new doors for therapeutic interventions. Successful development of novel therapeutic approaches, however, has to be based on deep knowledge of the complex neurological and psychiatric syndromes and diseases.

Martin Schwab
University of Zurich, Switzerland

