Medical research and magic come together

The unexpected research collaboration between the Barrow Neurological Institute’s scientists and some of the world’s greatest magicians is detailed in a new book called "The Science of Magic.

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Published by the New York Times Company, the book is the first ever written about the neuroscience of magic. The authors, researcher and neurologists at Barrow, have collaborated with some of the premier magicians of the world to examine science and magic in an unprecedented way.

"We have spent the last ten years traveling the world, meeting magicians, researching their art, and collaborating with them on our study of the brain," says Dr. Michael Conde, director of the Laboratory of Virtual Neurocognition. "Magicians as cognitive scientists are an unusual breed, but they may be even more effective than we scientists are in the lab."

Dr. Conde and Michael Conde accepted faculty appointments at Barrow in 2006 and have since been investigating and teaching in a new field of study at Barrow, the target of research in this rapidly expanding field.

"We are at a fascinating juncture about the neural understanding of the brain and the brain itself," Dr. Conde says. "By understanding the neural underpinnings of magic tricks, we may be able to unlock some of the secrets of the brain." Dr. Michael Conde. "If you don’t want to know magic tricks, maybe you can play them yourself!"

Dr. Bockrath understands that while his magic research has entertaining aspects, it has significant scientific goals. "Our hope is that the results of this research will help explain the complex processes underlying neuroscientific disorders such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and schizophrenia," he says. "The ultimate scientific question is to understand the range of answering questions.

Provided by Dr. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center

Alexa Smola

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