

# GRAND ROUNDS

Thursday, December 2, 2021 | 4:30pm- 6:00pm | Location: Zoom

Please [RSVP](#) for link or e-mail [bioethics@stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:bioethics@stonybrookmedicine.edu)

## American Dementia: Brain Health in an Unhealthy Society

**Daniel R. George, PhD, MSc / Peter J. Whitehouse MD-PhD**

### How do we improve brain health in the future?

For decades, researchers have chased a pharmaceutical cure for memory loss. But despite the fact that no disease-modifying biotech treatments have emerged, new research suggests that dementia rates have actually declined in the United States and Western Europe over the last decade. Why is this happening? And what does it mean for brain health in the future?

In *American Dementia*, Daniel R. George, PhD, MSc, and Peter J. Whitehouse, MD, PhD, argue that the current decline of dementia may be strongly linked to mid-twentieth century policies that reduced inequality, provided widespread access to education and healthcare, and brought about cleaner air, soil, and water. They also:

- Explain why Alzheimer's disease, an obscure clinical label until the 1970s, is the hallmark illness of our current hyper-capitalist era.
- Reveal how the soaring inequalities of the twenty-first century—which are sowing poverty, barriers to healthcare and education, loneliness, lack of sleep, stressful life events, environmental exposures, and climate change—are reversing the gains of the twentieth century and damaging our brains.
- Tackle the ageist tendencies in our culture, which disadvantage both vulnerable youth and elders.
- Make an evidence-based argument that policies like single-payer healthcare, a living wage, and universal access to free higher education and technical training programs will build collective resilience to dementia.
- Promote strategies that show how local communities can rise above the disconnection and loneliness that define our present moment and come together to care for our struggling neighbors.

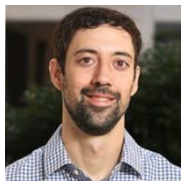
Ultimately, *American Dementia* asserts that actively remembering lessons from the twentieth century which help us become a healthier, wiser, and more compassionate society represents our most powerful intervention for preventing Alzheimer's and protecting human dignity. Exposing the inconvenient truths that confound market-based approaches to memory enhancement as well as broader social organization, the book imagines how we can act as citizens to protect our brains, build the cognitive resilience of younger generations, and rise to the moral challenge of caring for the cognitively frail.

AMERICAN  
DEMENTIA

\*\*\*  
BRAIN HEALTH IN AN  
UNHEALTHY SOCIETY



Daniel R. George, PhD, MSc  
Peter J. Whitehouse, MD, PhD



**Daniel R. George, PhD, MSc** is Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Public Health Sciences at Penn State College of Medicine. He earned his Ph.D and M.Sc in medical anthropology from Oxford University in 2010. Dr. George is co-author of *The Myth of Alzheimer's*, which was published by St. Martin's Press in 2008, and has been translated into 4 languages and co-author of *American Dementia* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021). He has over 130 professional peer-review publications, and his research on intergenerational issues in dementia care has been recognized by the global advocacy group Alzheimer's Disease International. In addition to teaching and research at Penn State, Dr. George has co-founded the Farmers Market in Hershey, and a Community Garden on the hospital campus. He serves as a member of the Alzheimer's Association Regional Board in Central Pennsylvania.



**Peter J. Whitehouse, MD-PhD** has a primary appointment as Professor of Neurology, with secondary positions as Professor of Psychiatry, Cognitive Science, Neuroscience, and Organizational Behavior, and former appointments (but current interests) in Psychology, Bioethics, History, and Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. He is also currently Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto, an incoming fellow at Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford, and President of Intergenerational Schools International. He received his undergraduate degree from Brown University and MD-PhD (Psychology) from The Johns Hopkins University (with PhD work at Harvard and Boston Universities), followed by a Fellowship in Neuroscience and Psychiatry, Neurology Residency, and faculty appointments at Hopkins. He has served in national and international leadership positions in neurology, geriatrics, and public health.

In 1999 Peter founded with his wife, Catherine, The Intergenerational Schools, unique public, multiage community schools in Cleveland. He is a serial social innovator with a focus on learning environments. He is the author and editor of hundreds of academic papers, book chapters, books, and multimedia projects ranging from genetics and cognitive neuroscience, to clinical issues, to community and public health, and ethics and the humanities. He often takes a critical stance towards existing models of thought.

Peter is a prevention oriented, intergenerational neurologist. His current main academic and practice focus is on ecopsychosocial models of brain health and aging and the role of the arts and humanities in health. He is currently focusing on new conceptions of wisdom and quality of life.