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Talk Title: The Impact of Heartbeats on Cognition and Emotion

Abstract:

Cognitive and emotional processes are shaped by the dynamic integration of the brain and body. A major channel of interoceptive information comes from the heart, where phasic signals are conveyed to the brain to indicate how fast and strong the heart is beating. This presentation will detail how cardiac afferent signals can interact with neuronal mechanisms to alter cognitive and emotion processing. Focusing on domains such as memory, fear and pain, this talk will provide an overview of empirical research illustrating the various ways in which cardiac signals can impact cognitive and affective processes. These findings have implications for understanding symptom perception and expression in different clinical conditions.

Biographical information:

Sarah Garfinkel is a Professor at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London (UCL), where she leads the Clinical and Affective Neuroscience Group. She completed her PhD in Experimental Psychology the University of Sussex, before undertaking a fellowship in Psychiatry and Neuroscience at the University of Michigan. At the Brighton and Sussex Medical School she underwent further training in autonomic neuroscience before establishing her lab at UCL in September 2020. Her current work focuses on brain-body interactions underlying emotion and cognition in clinical and neurodevelopmental groups, with a particular focus on the heart. In 2018 Sarah was named a "Rising Star" by Nature, and in 2021 she was awarded the Mid-Career Prize by the British Association for Cognitive Neuroscience.