The neuroreceptors and transporters underlying spontaneous brain activity

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Abstract

Understanding the neuromodulatory drivers of brain activity is essential for elucidating cognition and neuropathology. Neuromodulators act through neuroreceptors in a coordinated manner, yet most studies focus on individual neuromodulators, overlooking interconnected dynamics. To address this, we developed a neuroreceptor-based framework that integrates cortical density maps of 19 neuroreceptors and transporters from Positron Emission Tomography (PET) to model the BOLD signal and functional connectivity. Across four datasets ($N_{total} = 314$), this framework reveals a network architecture capturing dynamic interactions between neuroreceptors, transporters, and brain activity. The BOLD signal emerges from two neuroreceptor modules reflecting either higher-order associative or action-driven functions. Validation in independent datasets links the framework to LSD binding profiles and Modafinil's mechanism of action. Extending these findings, we uncover mechanistic links between neuroreceptors, transporters, and altered brain activity in neuropsychiatric disorders. Furthermore, the neuroreceptor-based framework outperforms anatomical-based models in reconstructing brain activity, demonstrating its predictive power. These findings underscore the potential of a neuroreceptor-based framework to advance our understanding of neuromodulatory mechanisms across diverse brain states and conditions.

Introduction

At any given moment, across the brain, a diverse array of neuromodulators binds to and unbinds from neurons driving activity. The complexity of this process becomes evident when considering that the human brain utilizes over 100 neuromodulators across approximately 10^{11} neurons, each forming an average of 1,000 unique connections[1]. This intricate interplay poses a significant challenge in identifying which specific neuromodulators drive brain activity at any moment.

Neuromodulators can induce either excitation or inhibition, enabling the brain's vast computational capabilities[2]. Moreover, the balance between excitatory and inhibitory inputs dynamically changes over time, reflecting different brain states[3]. These fluctuations have been linked to aging[4], psychosis[5] and can impact cognitive processes and behaviors across diverse domains, including social interactions[6], economic decisions[7], and even perception[8].

Neuromodulators act through their corresponding neuroreceptors, with brain activity emerging from the coordinated interplay of multiple neuromodulators and their associated neuroreceptors, rather than the action of any single neuromodulator[9]. However, most studies investigate the relationship between one or two neuromodulators and brain activity. Partly this is due to limitations of current methods as they typically measure only a few neuromodulators at a time or are restricted to a subset of brain regions[10]. Crucially, an understanding of the dynamic relationship among neuromodulators that drive moment-to-moment brain activity is lacking.

The concentration of neuroreceptors is an important factor in mediating the effects of neuromodulators on brain activity, as these serve as the primary sites for excitatory synaptic inputs[11], dynamically changing in response to neural activity, stimuli and conditions[12], and can shape long-term memory[13]. The concentration of neuroreceptors across the brain can be non-invasively estimated using PET tracer imaging[14,15]. Moreover, recent work has shown that neuroreceptors shape brain-wide communication estimated from the BOLD signal[16–18]. This association suggests that combining neuroreceptor density maps estimated from PET imaging with the BOLD signal could be a non-invasive method to uncover the neuromodulators that drive brain activity across the human cortex and unravel the complex mechanisms that underlie cognition and behavior.

Here, we show that a neuroreceptor-based framework can reconstructs the BOLD signal through

a weighted summation of PET-derived neuroreceptor and transporter density maps. Across four

datasets (N_{total} = 314), our framework reconstructs spontaneous brain activity and functional

connectivity (FC) from BOLD signals measured by functional MRI (fMRI), achieving an

average accuracy of R_{BOLD} = 0.58 ± 0.05 and R_{FC}= 0.62 ± 0.02. Notably, our analysis reveals that

the excitation-inhibition balance is maintained by two distinct modules of neuroreceptors and

transporters exhibiting. The framework's validity is supported by its ability to recover

neuroreceptors and transporters — 5-HT1a, 5-HT1b, 5-HT2a, and D2 — known to bind lysergic

acid diethylamide (LSD), and D2, 5-HT1a, 5-HT2a, and NET mediating the effects of Modafinil.

Furthermore, the framework identified mechanistic links between neuroreceptors, transporters,

and altered brain activity in schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and ADHD. Finally, neuroreceptor-

based reconstruction outperformed models based on structural connectivity and cortical folding

geometry.

Results

<u>Reconstructing the BOLD signal and functional connectivity from neuroreceptor and transporter</u>

<u>maps</u>

To determine if neuroreceptor and transporter density maps could non-invasively reveal the

neuromodulators that drive spontaneous brain activity, we assessed whether a linear modeling

framework could reconstruct the temporal dynamics of the BOLD signal. We utilize the most

comprehensive neuroreceptors and transporters cortical density maps to date as detailed in

Hansen *et. al*[19]. In brief, PET tracer imaging from a combined 1,238 healthy individuals was

used to map the densities of 19 neuroreceptors and transporters from 9 neuromodulator systems:

dopamine (D1, D2, DAT), norepinephrine (NET), serotonin (5-HT1A, 5-HT1B, 5-HT2A, 5-

HT4, 5-HT6, 5-HTT), acetylcholine (α4β2, M1, VAChT), glutamate (mGluR5, NMDA), γ-

aminobutyric acid (GABAa), histamine (H3), cannabinoid (CB1), and opioid neuroreceptor

(MOR; **Fig. S1**). For each neuroreceptor and transporter, we estimated the average density within

200 brain regions based on the local-global parcellation of the human cerebral cortex estimated

from resting-state fMRI by Schaefer *et. al.,* because voxel-wise estimates can be unstable and

noisy[20].

Spontaneous brain activity was estimated from 15 minutes of resting-state fMRI (N = 48) part of

the Human Connectome Project (HCP)[21]. The extensive scanning duration of the HCP dataset

allowed for an estimation of the relationship between neuroreceptors, transporters, and brain

activity across a broader range of neural states. The voxelwise BOLD signal from each

participant was averaged across the same brain regions defined by the Schaefer atlas, resulting in

200 x 1,200 data points per participant and 200 x 57,600 data points across all participants.

Independently, each of the 1,200 time points of the BOLD signal were reconstructed from a

weighted linear summation of the 19 neuroreceptor and transporter density maps (**Fig. 1A**). To

quantify effectiveness of the neuroreceptor-based framework, Pearson's correlation was used to

estimate the accuracy between the reconstructed and the empirical brain maps for each of the

57,600 time points.

Focusing on a representative participant to demonstrate the effectiveness of the neuroreceptor-

based framework, the BOLD signal at each moment in time was reconstructed with an average

accuracy of $R_{BOLD\_subj24} = 0.53 \pm 0.08$ (mean $\pm$ std; **Fig. 1B**). Comparable accuracy was observed

across all participants ($R_{BOLD} = 0.51 \pm 0.08$; **Fig. 1C**). The observed reconstruction accuracy was

significantly greater than that obtained from null models based on spatially permuted

neuroreceptor and transporter maps ($P_{spatial} < 0.001$) and from a permutation that preserved the

spatial auto-correlation, spin test ($P_{spin} < 0.001$; **Fig. 1D**)[22].

Figure 1. Neuroreceptor-based framework can reconstruct the BOLD signal and functional connectivity. (A) Neuroreceptor-based framework schematic. The BOLD signal was reconstructed from a linear summation of 19 neuroreceptors and transporters (R_1 to R_{19}) each weighted by corresponding coefficients (β_1 to β_{19}). For visualization purposes we have omitted the constant term in the model. (B) Reconstruction accuracy of the BOLD signal. Accuracy of neuroreceptor-based framework in reconstructing the BOLD signal over time in a representative participant. Pearson's correlation was used to estimate the accuracy between the reconstructed and the empirical brain maps. Brain plots depict the empirical, reconstructed brain and the accuracy between brain maps for representative time points. Line plots depict the accuracy over time. Blue line reflects the observed accuracy of the neuroreceptor-based model. Dark and light green lines reflect the accuracy from spatially permuted (spatial) and spin-permutation (spin) null models. (C) Group level reconstruction accuracy for each of the 1,200 time points per participant. (D) Neuroreceptor-based reconstruction is significantly greater than spatial and spin null models. Bar plots show the average accuracy at the group-level and for the spatial and spin null models. Error bars show mean ± sem. (E) Reconstructing functional connectivity. Accuracy of reconstructing the group-level functional connectivity. The BOLD signal was concatenated

across participants and Pearson's correlation was used to estimate the empirical functional
connectivity (*left*). The reconstructed BOLD signal was concatenated across participants and
Pearson's correlation was used to estimate the functional connectivity (*right*). (F) Comparison
with spatial and spin null models. Blue line depicts the accuracy value from panel D. For both
null models, the functional connectivity was estimated from the reconstructed BOLD signal by
first concatenating the signal across participants followed by Pearson's correlation. ***$P <$
0.001.
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Further, given that spontaneous brain activity exhibits coordination, or functional connectivity

(FC), among brain regions, we determined whether the reconstructed BOLD signal preserved

this inherent property. Moreover, reconstructing the BOLD signal from neuroreceptor and

transporter density does not inherently guarantee that the reconstruction will preserve FC at a

comparable level. Thus, the ability to accurately reconstruct the inherent FC would validate the

reliability of the modeling results. Conversely, if the reconstruction were dominated by random

noise, the inherent FC would not be accurately reproduced.

To assess whether the reconstructed BOLD signal preserved inherent functional connectivity, we

concatenated the empirical and reconstructed BOLD signals across participants and used

Pearson's correlation to estimate the empirical and reconstructed functional connectivity

networks, respectively. The reconstructed functional connectivity demonstrated comparable

accuracy to that observed in the temporal BOLD signal ($R_{FC} = 0.61$; **Fig. 1E**) and was

significantly greater than both null models ($P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$; **Fig. 1F**). Together,

these findings highlight that a neuroreceptor-based framework can accurately reconstruct

spontaneous brain activity and its inherent functional connectivity.

<u>Two distinct modules of neuroreceptors and transporters underlie dynamic brain activity</u>

No neuroreceptor or transporter acts in isolation; their actions are inherently coordinated[9]. For

instance, the interplay among neuroreceptors and transporters associated with acetylcholine,

dopamine, noradrenaline, and serotonin play a crucial role in modulating brain activity

associated with attention[23] and working memory maintenance[24]. However, most studies are

limited to investigating only a few neuroreceptors and transporters at a time and therefore a

comprehensive view is crucially lacking. We then investigated if the neuroreceptor-based

framework could provide a holistic view of neuroreceptors and transporters working together to

drive brain activity. Specifically, we investigated whether model-derived drive values (i.e., β-

values), which quantify the contributions of individual neuroreceptors and transporters to the

BOLD signal, could identify the specific set of neuroreceptors and transporters working in

congruence to drive fluctuations in brain activity.

As shown in Figure 2A, these drive values (i.e. β-values) exhibit marked fluctuations over time

within a participant. To explore the relationship between drive values and dynamic brain activity,

we focused on three representative neuroreceptors—GABAa, M1 muscarinic, and H3

histamine—that bind different neuromodulators (**Fig. 2B**). From Figure 2B, two observations

were apparent. First, GABAa, M1 and H3 demonstrated periods of both positive and negative

associations with the BOLD signal, indicating dynamic relationship with brain activity. Second,

GABAa and M1 exhibited strong temporal coordination in drive values, while H3 showed an

inverse relationship with both. These observations suggest that fluctuations in brain activity

reflect coordination among multiple and distinct neuroreceptors and transporters. Understanding

how neuromodulatory systems influence the emergent patterns of brain activity and cognitive

processes requires quantifying the extent of temporal coordination among neuroreceptors and

transporters.

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Figure 2. Two neuroreceptor and transporter modules underlie spontaneous brain activity.
(A) Drive values (β-values) for all 19 neuroreceptors and transporters from a representative
participant. (B) Drive values for GABAa, M1, and H3 neuroreceptors over a period of time from
the same participant. (C) Group-level drive network depicting the strength of coordination
between neuroreceptor drive values over time. Drive network was estimated using Pearson
correlation to quantify the extent of pairwise coordination among neuroreceptors and transporters
over time. Clustering analysis identified two distinct modules, NR1 and NR2. (D) Visualization
of the drive network structure, showing only the top 20% of strongest connections. Node size
indicates the weighted degree of the network, while edge thickness reflects the strength of
connections (R-value) between neuroreceptors. The black outline represents provincial hubs, and

the red outline represents connector hubs. (E) Schematic representation of provincial and
connector hubs in a network. (F) Provincial hub and (G) connector hub scores for each
neuroreceptor, ranked according to hub score. Hub scores were calculated using positive values
in the neuroreceptor drive network, and statistical significance was assessed by permuting the
drive network in Panel C 1,000 times. Outlined bars represent identified hubs. Note that while 5-
HT1a exhibited a high connector hub score, it was not considered a hub due to weak correlation
values within and between modules. ns, non-significant.
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To quantify the extent of coordination among neuroreceptors and transporters, the drive values

were concatenated across participants and pairwise coordination was estimated using Pearson

correlation. Positive correlations indicated coordinated changes, as observed between GABAa

and M1 ($R_{GABAa:M1} = 0.68$), while negative correlations suggested inverse relationships, such as

between GABAa and H3 ($R_{GABAa:H3} = -0.29$). Across all neuroreceptors and transporters, the

correlations form a neuroreceptor drive network representing the overall coordination among all

neuroreceptors and transporters. Additionally, clustering this network could reveal whether the

observed coordination between GABAa and M1 suggests the existence of modules composed of

multiple neuroreceptors and transporters working in concert.

The neuroreceptor drive network revealed distinct patterns of positive and negative correlations

among drive values, consistent with those observed between GABAa, M1, and H3 (**Fig. 2C,D**).

Moreover, clustering analysis identified two modules, NR1 and NR2 of neuroreceptors and

transporters. Additionally, as shown in Figure 2D, a subset of neuroreceptors within both the

NR1 and NR2 modules exhibited strong coordination with other neuroreceptors in their

respective modules (back outlined nodes), while another subset acted as connectors linking the

NR1 and NR2 modules (red outlined nodes).

Neuroreceptors or transporters that showed strong coordination (i.e., positive correlations) within

their module are referred to as provincial hubs, whereas those linking different modules are

termed connector hubs (**Fig. 2E**). To quantify the role of a neuroreceptor or transporter as a

provincial hub, we calculated the within-module degree, which measures the strength of

coordination within the same module. The M1 neuroreceptor was identified as a candidate

provincial hub in the NR1 module, while the D2 neuroreceptor was identified as a candidate

provincial hub in the NR2 module ($P_{perm} < 0.05$; **Fig. 2F**). In contrast, the participation

coefficient was used to quantify the role of neuroreceptors and transporters as connector hubs

linking the NR1 and NR2 modules. The top candidate connector hubs identified were α4β2, 5-

HT4, 5-HT6, CB1, and D1 ($P_{perm} < 0.05$; **Fig. 2G**). Additionally, the neuroreceptor drive

network retained the same organization (R = 0.93) even after accounting for spatial similarity

among neuroreceptor and transporter density maps (**Fig. S2**).

Notably, the NR1 and NR2 modules were not defined by neuromodulator families or by

excitatory versus inhibitory properties. Instead, we observed distinct density distributions of

these modules across the cortex (**Fig. 3**). The average density of neuroreceptors and transporters

in both NR1 and NR2 was highest in the inferior prefrontal regions, insula, and temporal areas

(**Fig. 3A,B**). Differences among the two modules indicated that the NR2-associated

neuroreceptors and transporters showed greater density in the frontal, motor, and visual cortices

indicating that it might be associated with action-driven function. Whereas the NR1 module was

more prominent in the orbitofrontal, parietal and temporal regions which suggests that it reflects

higher-order associative functions (**Fig. 3C**). Together, these findings indicate that coordinated

interactions among diverse neuromodulators, neuroreceptors, and transporters contribute to the

shaping of emergent patterns in brain activity.

Figure 3. Cortical density differences between neuroreceptor modules. (A) The average
density of the neuroreceptors and transporters part of the NR1 module. Module density map was
estimated by averaging the z-score normalized neuroreceptor and transporter density maps part
of the NR1 module. See Figure S1 for individual neuroreceptor and transporter density maps. (B)
Same as panel A, but for the NR2 module. (C) Difference in the density across the cortex

between the NR1 and NR2 modules. NR2-associated neuroreceptors and transporters exhibited
greater density in the frontal, motor, and visual cortices, while the NR1 module was more
prominent in the orbitofrontal, parietal and temporal regions.
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<u>Validating the neurobiological association between density maps and BOLD activity</u>
Merely demonstrating that the BOLD signal can be reconstructed from neuroreceptor and
transporter density maps is insufficient to establish that the underlying relationship genuinely
reflects neurobiological associations. This limitation highlights the necessity of validating
whether the analysis captures genuine neurobiological associations. In humans, such validation
can be achieved by assessing whether the analysis can accurately reflect alterations in brain
activity induced by neuropharmacological agents. The critical aspect of this validation involves
determining whether the analysis can successfully identify the neuroreceptors and transporters
known to mediate the effects of a given neuropharmacological agent. Successfully recovering
these known neuroreceptors would provide strong support that the identified relationship
between the BOLD signal and the neuroreceptors and transporters truly reflects the underlying
neurobiological mechanism.
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We utilized two datasets in which participants received LSD and Modafinil to validate that the
reconstructed BOLD activity from neuroreceptor and transporter density maps accurately reflects
neurobiological associations. In the first dataset, participants (N = 15) underwent 7 minutes of
resting-state fMRI after receiving a Placebo and LSD[25]. In the second dataset, participants (N =
13) underwent 5 minutes of resting-state fMRI scanning before and after receiving Modafinil[26].
Moreover, understanding the mechanism of action of these drugs is important because they have
been shown to exhibit beneficial effects for the treatment of neurological and neuropsychiatric
disorders[27,28].
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Focusing first on the LSD dataset, the BOLD signal and the functional connectivity were
reconstructed in the same manner as was done in the HCP dataset. We first established using the
data after administration of the Placebo that the neuroreceptor-based framework reconstructed
the BOLD signal significantly greater than both null models ($R_{BOLD} = 0.68 \pm 0.02$; $P_{spatial} <$
0.001; $P_{spin} < 0.001$) as well as the functional connectivity ($R_{FC} = 0.64$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} <$

0.001) (**Fig. S3A-C**). Similar results were obtained after the administration of LSD for both the

BOLD signal ($R_{BOLD} = 0.66 \pm 0.02$) and functional connectivity ($R_{FC} = 0.63$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; P_{spin}

< 0.001; **Fig. S3D-F**). The model reconstructed the temporal BOLD signal significantly better

after administration of the Placebo compared to LSD ($t = 2.82$, $P = 0.01$), but these differences

were relatively small ($\Delta R_{ave} = 0.02$; **Fig. S3G**). Moreover, the neuroreceptor-based framework

reconstructed the empirical changes in functional connectivity between the LSD and Placebo

conditions estimated using edgewise paired sample t-test significantly greater than both null

models ($R_{LSD-Placebo} = 0.38$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$; **Fig. S3H,I**). Together, these findings

confirm the findings that the neuroreceptor-based framework is able to reconstruct the multiple

facets of the BOLD signal and functional connectivity.

The critical element in the validation analysis is to determine the neuroreceptor(s) and

transporter(s) altering the neuroreceptor drive network and correspondingly the brain activity

from the state before to the state after administration of a neuropharmacological agent. The first

step to determining the mechanism of action is to estimate the neuroreceptor drive networks D_p

and D_q for brain *state p* and *state q*, which can correspond to the state before and the state after

administration of LSD or Modafinil (**Fig. 4A**). Importantly, D_p and D_q dictate the extent of

coordination among neuroreceptors and transporters driving brain activity. Therefore, changes in

the drive network will correspondingly be reflected in the BOLD signal. We propose that the

transition from state p to state q is mediated by a modulation network, M, that shifts the drive

network from D_p to D_q. Mathematically, this is formulated as:

324                    $$D_q = D_p \bullet M \qquad\qquad (1)$$

325   and M can be determined by taking the inner product between the inverse of D_p and D_q:

327                    $$M = inv(D_p) \bullet D_q \qquad\qquad (2)$$

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Figure 4. Neuroreceptor-based framework identifies the neuroreceptors and transporters
mediating the effects of LSD and Modafinil. (A) Schematic representation of transition
between brain states. (i) The neuroreceptor drive network, D_p, (ii) dictates the extent to which
individual neurochemicals acting through their receptors contribute to (iii) brain activity. (iv)

The transition between brain states, such as before to after administration of a
neuropharmacological agent is mediated by a modulation network, M, that shifts the drive
network from D_p to D_q. (v) M can be determined by taking the inner product between the inverse
of D_p and D_q. Critically, all diagonal elements in the neuroreceptor drive networks are set to
zero. Panel A is only for illustrative purposes and formal analyses are shown in panels B-J. (B-
G) Mechanism of action of LSD. (B) Group-level neuroreceptor drive network after placebo
administration, estimated from the drive values from each of the 19 neuroreceptor and
transporter using Pearson correlation. Group-level neuroreceptor drive network is estimated by
averaging the neuroreceptor drive network across participants. The network is organized
according to the module organization identified in the HCP dataset. (C) Same as panel B, but
after administration of LSD. (D) Differences between the LSD and placebo drive networks,
assessed using paired samples t-tests. Correlation values were Fisher z-transformed prior to
statistical testing. The top half of the network shows statistically significant changes ($P < 0.05$,
FDR corrected), while the bottom half illustrates the magnitude of all pairwise changes. (E)
Changes in drive network connectivity within and between (Btwn) modules, evaluated using a
one-sample t-test to determine significant deviations from zero. (F) Group-level modulation
network driving the shifts in brain activity from the placebo to the LSD-induced brain state.
Modulation network is estimated by taking the inner product between the inverse of Placebo
(panel B) and LSD Neuroreceptor drive network (panel C). (G) The first principal component of
the modulation network to determine the extent of modulation induced by each neuroreceptor
and transporter in driving the transition from the placebo to LSD state. (H-J) Mechanism of
action of Modafinil. Same as panel D, E, and G, but for Modafinil. ***$P < 0.001$; **$P < 0.01$; *P
< 0.05; [#]$P < 0.1$; ns, not significant.
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To apply the mathematical framework to the LSD dataset, we first estimated the corresponding

neuroreceptor drive network after administration of the Placebo and LSD (**Fig. 4B,C**). The

neuroreceptor drive network exhibited only a small number of significant pairwise changes in

response to LSD ($P_{FDR} < 0.05$; **Fig. 4D**). These alterations were part of broader shifts within and

between modules indicating significant decreases in coordination among the neuroreceptors part

of the NR1 module ($t_{ave} = -0.60 \pm 1.45$; $P = 0.01$) and a shift toward enhanced coordination

between modules ($t_{ave} = 0.48 \pm 1.71$; $P = 0.01$; **Fig. 4E**).

The neuroreceptors and transporters inducing these changes in the neuroreceptor drive network

are reflected in the modulation network. As can be observed in Figure 4F, the modulatory

network indicated that LSD exerted a complex set of changes affecting most relationships across

the neuroreceptor drive network. To determine the neuroreceptors primarily responsible for the

modulations, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to identify the dominant

constituents underlying M. The first principal component of the modulatory network accounted

for 35.89% ($P_{perm} < 0.001$) of the variance and all other components were not significant ($P_{perm} >$

0.05; **Fig. S4A**). The neuroreceptor primarily responsible for driving LSD induced changes in

brain activity was 5-HT1b ($P_{perm} = 7.2 \times 10^{-4}$), followed by D2 ($P_{perm} = 0.01$), 5-HT1a ($P_{perm} =$

0.03) and 5-HT2a ($P_{perm} = 0.07$; **Fig. 4G**). These neuroreceptors are known to bind LSD, with 5-

HT1b in particular having the highest affinity for LSD[29].

Extending the analysis to Modafinil, the model accurately reconstructed the BOLD signal and

functional connectivity *pre* ($R_{BOLD} = 0.59 \pm 0.03$; $R_{FC} = 0.62$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$) and

post administration of Modafinil ($R_{BOLD} = 0.60 \pm 0.03$; $R_{FC} = 0.66$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$;

Fig. S5A-F). Additionally, the analysis reconstructed equally well both the brain activity *pre* and

post administration of Modafinil ($t = -1.34$, $P = 0.20$) and the reconstructed functional

connectivity reflected the observed differences between *pre* and *post* Modafinil ($R_{Post-Pre} = 0.37$;

$P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$; **Fig. S5G-I**). Significant pairwise differences in the neuroreceptor

drive network were found ($P < 0.05$; **Fig. 4H**; **Fig S5J,K**), but no significant differences were

observed within and between the NR1 and NR2 modules ($P > 0.05$; **Fig. 4I**).

The modulation network indicated that Modafinil mediated effects were driven by a subset of

neuroreceptors and transporters (**Fig. S5L**). The first PCA component which accounted for

99.02% ($P_{perm} < 0.001$; **Fig. S4B)** of the variance in the modulation network indicated that

Modafinil mediated effects were primarily driven by D2 ($P_{perm} = 0.02$), followed by 5-HT1a

($P_{perm} = 0.03$), 5-HT2b ($P_{perm} = 0.05$), and NET ($P_{perm} = 0.07$; **Fig. 4J**). The exact mechanism of

action of Modafinil is not known, but these results align with prior work showing that Modafinil

alters dopamine and serotonin levels in the brain[30–33]. Correctly identifying known

neuroreceptors that bind LSD and those mediating the effects of Modafinil indicated that the

underlying relationship between the BOLD signal and neuroreceptor and transporter density map

could reveal the mechanism of action of neuropharmacological agents, and the observed

relationship genuinely reflects neurobiological processes validating the relevance of the proposed

framework.

<u>Neuroreceptors inducing neuropsychiatric illness induces changes in the BOLD signal</u>

We then investigated whether this framework could be extended to provide a mechanistic
relationship between the neuroreceptors, transporters and neuropsychiatric illnesses. Linking
neuropsychiatric illnesses to specific neuroreceptors, transporters or neuromodulators is critical
since it would improve diagnosis and treatment. For this analysis, we used the UCLA
Consortium for Neuropsychiatric Phenomics (LA5c) dataset, which includes individuals
diagnosed with schizophrenia (N = 45), bipolar disorder (N = 36), and attention
deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; N = 39), along with a healthy control group (N = 118)[34].
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To identify the neuroreceptors and transporters associated with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder,
and ADHD, we applied the same framework used to determine the mechanism of action of LSD
and Modafinil. We reconstructed the temporal BOLD signal for each participant using the 19
neuroreceptor and transporter density maps. The reconstruction accuracy of the healthy control
group ($R_{BOLD} = 0.55 \pm 0.01$; mean $\pm$ SEM) was not significantly different from the schizophrenia
($R_{BOLD} = 0.55 \pm 0.01$; $P_{Diff\_SCZ\_to\_HC} = 0.80$), bipolar disorder ($R_{BOLD} = 0.55 \pm 0.02$; $P_{Diff\_BD\_to\_HC}$
$= 0.08$), and ADHD groups ($R_{BOLD} = 0.55 \pm 0.01$; $P_{Diff\_ADHD\_to\_HC} = 0.43$; **Fig. S6**). Additionally,
the neuroreceptor-based framework reconstructed differences in functional connectivity between
neuropsychiatric groups and healthy controls significantly greater than null models for
schizophrenia ($R_{SCZ-HC\_FC} = 0.56$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$), bipolar disorder ($R_{BD-HC\_FC} =$
0.45; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$), and ADHD ($R_{ADHD-HC\_FC} = 0.35$; $P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} <$
0.001; **Fig. S7**). These findings further support the effectiveness of neuroreceptor and transporter
density maps in reconstructing spontaneous brain activity.
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In the schizophrenia group, the neuroreceptor drive network exhibited a limited number of
significant pairwise changes compared to healthy controls ($P < 0.05$) and these changes were part
of a broader set of alterations within and between neuroreceptor drive network modules ($P <$
0.05; **Fig. S8A**). To determine the neuroreceptors and transporters driving these changes, we
estimated the modulation network required to transition from the healthy to the schizophrenic
brain state in the same manner as the analysis on LSD and Modafinil. The modulation network
exhibited a complex pattern, with the first principal component accounting for 67.65% of the
variance ($P_{perm} < 0.001$); all other components were not significant ($P_{perm} > 0.05$; **Fig. S8B**). The
modulation analysis identified norepinephrine transporter (NET) as the primary driver ($P_{perm} =$

0.02; **Fig. 5A**). Other neuroreceptors mediating the effects included serotonin receptors 5-HT1a

(P_{perm} = 0.03) and 5-HT4 (P_{perm} = 0.09), and additional associations with NMDA (P_{perm} = 0.02),

α4β2 (P_{perm} = 0.07), and GABAa (P_{perm} = 0.09) neuroreceptors.

Figure 5. Neuroreceptors and transporters mediating the alterations in brain activity
across neuropsychiatric disorders. (A) Neuroreceptors and transporters mediating the changes
in brain activity from healthy controls (HC) to schizophrenia (SCZ). (B,C) Same as panel A, but
for bipolar disorder (BD) and ADHD, respectively. Statistical significance was determined based
on a permutation test and P_{perm} < 0.05 were considered significant. ns, not significant.

For bipolar disorder and ADHD, the analysis similarly identified a small set of pairwise changes

within and between neuroreceptor network modules (P < 0.05; **Fig. S8C-F**). In bipolar disorder,

NET was the primary driver similar to schizophrenia (P_{perm} = 0.04; **Fig. 5B**). Overall,

neuroreceptor mediating the effect of bipolar disorder included 5-HT1a (P_{perm} = 0.01), 5-HT4

(P_{perm} = 0.06), α4β2 (P_{perm} = 0.07), NMDA (P_{perm} = 0.08), and H3 histamine (P_{perm} = 0.09)

neuroreceptors. In ADHD, changes were mediated by the dopamine, D1 (P_{perm} = 0.01), and

acetylcholine, α4β2 (P_{perm} = 0.01) neuroreceptors (**Fig. 5C**). The analysis also implicated

GABAa (P_{perm} = 0.04) and the 5-HT4 serotonin neuroreceptor (P_{perm} = 0.07). Overall, findings

suggest that these disorders may involve dysregulation across multiple neuromodulators and/or

neuroreceptor and transporter systems.

Subject-specific neuroreceptors driving neuropsychiatric induced alterations in the BOLD signal

Neuropsychiatric disorders exhibit considerable variability at the individual level in their

relationships with the brain[35,36]. A critical question is whether this variability can be attributed to

specific neuroreceptors and transporters unique to each patient. To explore this, we extended our

framework for identifying neuroreceptors driving group-level alterations in brain activity to

individual patients. Using a patient-specific framework, we identified the neuroreceptors and

transporters responsible for shifting brain activity from a healthy state to one associated with

neuropsychiatric illness in each patient. Additionally, we assessed whether the extent of

modulation by individual neuroreceptors formed distinct subgroups of patients with shared

profiles.

For the schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and ADHD cohorts, the analysis identified three

subgroups of patients with distinct neuroreceptors and transporters driving the changes (**Fig. S9**).

Moreover, we tested if subgroups could be identified from the functional connectivity profile

estimated from the BOLD signal. Clustering individuals based on their functional connectivity

profile did not identify clear subgroups or differences in the modulation values across

neuroreceptors and transporters in schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or ADHD ($P > 0.05$; **Fig.

S10**). Collectively, these findings suggest that the neuroreceptor-based framework could be a

new avenue for personalized diagnostics and tailored therapeutic interventions.

Consistent neuroreceptor drive networks across datasets

Further, we assessed the similarity of neuroreceptor drive networks across datasets. Strong

similarity between these independent datasets would enhance the validity. To quantify the extent

of similarity, we compared the neuroreceptor drive networks derived from the LSD, modafinil,

and LA5c datasets to the network estimated from the HCP dataset. Neuroreceptor drive networks

from each of the other datasets showed strong similarity with the HCP-derived network (R_{ave} =

0.92; **Fig. S11**). This consistent relationship between the BOLD signal and neuroreceptors and

transporters across diverse conditions underscores the stable dynamical interplay between brain

activity and the underlying neuromodulator, neuroreceptors and transporters.

Reconstructing spontaneous brain activity: neuroreceptors vs. structural and geometric modes

Lastly, previous work has shown that spontaneous brain activity is shaped and constrained by

anatomical factors – structural connectivity (SC)[37,38] and cortical folding geometry (GC)[39].

Models based on SC and GC suggest that spontaneous brain activity emerges from a weighted

linear summation of modes (also called harmonics) of the SC or GC. However, it is an open

question as to which model – neuroreceptor, structural or geometric – can accurately and

parsimoniously reconstruct spontaneous brain activity.

Toward this end, we compared the accuracy of the neuroreceptor-based reconstructed maps of

the dominant spatial patterns of the BOLD signal with reconstructed maps obtained using

structural and geometric modes. For this analysis, we utilized the BOLD signal from the HCP

dataset due to its extensive scanning duration. Specifically, the BOLD signal was concatenated

across participants resulting in 200 x 57,600 data points. PCA was applied to the concatenated

BOLD signal to identify the dominant spatial patterns of activity. We focus on the first three

components – C1, C2, and C3 – which accounted for 23.57% of the variance to demonstrate the

differences in reconstruction accuracy between neuroreceptor-, structural- and geometric-based

frameworks (**Fig. 6A**). The neuroreceptor-based reconstructed components closely matched the

empirical components with high accuracy ($R_{C1} = 0.73$; $R_{C2} = 0.64$; $R_{C3} = 0.85$; **Fig. 6B**). The

accuracy was significantly greater than that observed in null models ($P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} <$

0.001; **Fig. 6C**).

Figure 6. Neuroreceptor-based reconstruction outperforms models based on structural and geometric modes. (A) Brain maps of the dominant spatial patterns of the BOLD signal identified using PCA – C1, C2, and C3. (B) Neuroreceptor-based reconstruction accuracy of the BOLD components C1, C2, and C3. Accuracy was estimated using Pearson correlation. (C) Comparison with two null models: spatially permuted (*left*) and spin permutation (*right*). The blue line indicates the accuracy of the neuroreceptor-based reconstruction from panel B. (D-F) The number of structural and geometric modes required to achieve the same reconstruction accuracy as the neuroreceptor-based framework for BOLD signal components (D) C1, (E) C2, and (F) C3. The blue line represents the reconstruction accuracy obtained using neuroreceptors and transporters, as shown in panel B. The insert plot shows the ratio of the number of structural and geometric modes to the 19 neuroreceptors and transporters. The gray line indicates parity. ***P < 0.001.

SC and GC-based reconstruction was based on the method proposed by Pang *et. al.*, in which

modes were sequentially added to the model until the reconstruction accuracy of the SC- and

GC-based frameworks equaled the accuracy obtained with the neuroreceptor-based framework[39].

SC or GC based reconstructions were deemed to outperform if fewer modes were required to

achieve the save accuracy as the neuroreceptor-based framework. For BOLD components C1,

C2, and C3, the SC-based reconstruction required at least 52 modes, while the GC-based

reconstruction required at least 50 modes to match the accuracy achieved by using only 19

neuroreceptor and transporter density maps—demonstrating the effectiveness of reconstructing

spontaneous brain activity with neuroreceptor density maps (**Fig. 6D-F**).

The analysis was extended to include components C4 through C10 which account for a total

40.85% of variance to corroborate the findings on components C1, C2 and C3. The

neuroreceptor-based framework accurately reconstructed these additional components with an

accuracy of $R > 0.64$, significantly exceeding both null models ($P_{spatial} < 0.001$; $P_{spin} < 0.001$;

Fig. S12). Reflecting the findings with components C1, C2 and C3, the neuroreceptor-based

reconstruction was more parsimonious for 8 out of the 10 BOLD components (**Fig. S13**). Only

components C4 and C6 required fewer GC modes than the neuroreceptor analysis. However,

these components accounted for only 4.01% and 2.57% of the spatiotemporal variance in the

BOLD signal, respectively. The parsimony of the neuroreceptor-based framework in

reconstructing spontaneous brain activity suggests that neuroreceptor and transporters may

provide a more direct and biologically meaningful basis for modeling brain function compared to

anatomical-based approaches.

Discussion

Neuromodulators are the primary substrate by which neurons communicate[40]. Like most aspects

of the human brain, no individual neuromodulator works alone to generate brain activity; instead

brain activity is generated from coordination among multiple neuromodulators acting through

their corresponding neuroreceptors and transporters[41]. Here, we present a neuroreceptor-based

framework to identify the neuroreceptors and transporters working in congruence to drive

spontaneous brain activity. Across four datasets, the neuroreceptor-based framework accurately

reconstructs the BOLD signal and functional connectivity. In each of the datasets, the BOLD

signal reflected the interplay between two modules of neuroreceptors and transporters reflecting

either higher-order associative or action-driven functions. To the best of our knowledge, this is

the first analysis to report that spontaneous brain activity reflects interactions among two
modules of diverse neuroreceptors and transporters. These findings demonstrate that a
neuroreceptor-based framework can advance our understanding of neuromodulatory mechanisms
across diverse brain states, conditions and pathology.
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The neuroreceptor-based framework reconstructed the resting-state fMRI BOLD signal from a
weighted linear summation of the spatial density maps from 19 neuroreceptors and transporters
density maps estimated from PET imaging. The framework accurately reconstructed the BOLD
signal and functional connectivity. Moreover, the analysis revealed the mechanism of action for
an administered neuropharmacological agent – LSD and Modafinil. Further, the framework
provided insight into the neuroreceptors and transporters inducing alterations in brain activity in
schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and ADHD. Overall, reconstructing the BOLD signal from
neuroreceptors and transporters density maps provides a non-invasive method to determine the
neuroreceptors and transporters working in conjunction to drive brain activity at any given
moment.
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Our most striking finding was that spontaneous brain activity reflected a coordinated interplay
among a diverse set of excitatory and inhibitory neuroreceptors and transporters, highlighting the
complex neuromodulatory landscape of the cortex. This finding suggests that the balance of
excitation and inhibition is managed by two distinct modules – NR1 and NR2 – reflecting action
drive and higher-order associative functions, respectively. The differing density distributions of
neuroreceptors and transporters between modules across cortical regions suggests that brain
activity and function is locally shaped by specific neuromodulatory profiles. For instance, the
higher density of NR1 module in orbitofrontal, parietal and temporal areas may facilitate the
integration of sensory and associative information[42], whereas the NR2 module's prominence in
frontal, motor, and visual regions may align with the demand for rapid modulation of motor
responses and visual processing[43,44]. This spatial organization suggests that the brain dynamically
allocates neuromodulatory resources in a region-specific manner which may enhance its capacity
to adapt to diverse cognitive and behavioral demands. Moreover, the modules may serve as a
safeguard against excessive excitation synchronization across cortical regions[45,46].
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Why has the brain gone to such a great extent to maintain a rich tapestry of neuromodulators,

neuroreceptors and transporters to facilitate communication? One possible reason could be that

utilizing multiple neuromodulators, neuroreceptors and transporters could fine tune the

excitation-inhibition balance, enabling neurons to maintain responsiveness across a broad

spectrum of inputs and to adapt to varying inputs without changing their fundamental

properties[47,48]. Furthermore, the interplay between different neuromodulators, neuroreceptors,

and transporters may serve an important role in network-level flexibility. We speculate that a

brain region's capacity to respond to diverse neuromodulators enables it to be part of multiple

subnetworks depending on the context. This versatility may facilitate efficient communication

across the brain and support diverse cognitive functions without necessitating dedicated, fixed

circuitry for every specific task[49]. Such a flexible integration among multiple subnetworks could

allow the brain to maximize computational power while minimizing the metabolic costs[50].

The analysis also provided insight into the mechanism of action of an administered

neuropharmacological agent. Determining the mechanism of action has been challenging

because neuropharmacological agents have direct and indirect effects on the activation

propensity of neuroreceptors and neurons[51]. The analysis accurately identified the neuroreceptors

that bind LSD and neuroreceptors mediating the effects of Modafinil, providing strong support

for the efficacy of the analysis. Showing that the analysis can identify the mechanism of action

of LSD and Modafinil indicates that the framework could be utilized to provide insight into the

mechanism of action of other neuropharmacological agents and narrow the search for therapeutic

treatments for substance abuse[52,53] and neuropsychiatric illness[54,55].

We extended our framework to investigate neuropsychiatric disorders—schizophrenia, bipolar

disorder, and ADHD—to identify the neuroreceptors and transporters driving alterations in brain

activity associated with each condition. In both schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, the

norepinephrine transporter (NET) emerged as a key mediator of dysfunction, aligning with prior

pharmacological studies[56,57] and animal models[58] suggesting it plays a critical role in these

conditions. The involvement of NET may reflect alterations in the Locus Coeruleus, a region

responsible for the release of norepinephrine[59]. While the leading hypothesis and

pharmacotherapy in schizophrenia is the dopamine hypothesis[60], however, medication targeting

dopamine receptors exhibits limited efficacy[61,62]. In line with these findings, our results did not

identify a significant association with dopamine neuroreceptors and transporters indicating that

dopamine may not be the primary driver of schizophrenia. In bipolar disorder, norepinephrine is

thought to play a role in triggering manic episodes[63]. For ADHD, the dopamine D1

neuroreceptor was identified as the primary driver of altered brain activity, consistent with

previous research indicating its involvement in the disorder's pathophysiology[64]. Moreover, the

analysis identified the neuroreceptors and transporters underlying alterations in brain activity at

the individual level indicating that the framework could be used for personalized diagnosis and

treatment.

Our results suggest that these disorders may involve dysregulation across multiple

neuromodulators and/or neuroreceptor and transporter systems rather than a single system. This

across the board dysfunction could arise from an initial impairment in one system, with

compensatory adjustments in others to maintain homeostasis[65]. Alternatively, a common

underlying factor might disrupt multiple systems[66]. Alternatively, the observed dysfunction may

reflect underlying abnormalities in the neurons responsible for releasing neurotransmitters such

as norepinephrine or dopamine, with downstream effects manifesting in the associated

neuroreceptors and transporters. This broad pattern of dysfunction highlights the complexity of

neuropsychiatric conditions, underscoring the need for integrative approaches that consider the

interplay among diverse neuromodulators. Toward this end, multimodal imaging can deepen our

understanding of the coordinated roles of neuroreceptors and transporters in maintaining healthy

brain function[67] and how their dysregulation can lead to pathological states[68,69].

The main focus of our analysis was on the relationship between neuroreceptors, transporters and

the BOLD activity, but the BOLD signal can be reconstructed from anatomical factors –

structural connectivity[37,38] and cortical folding geometry[39]. It is an open question as to which

model – neuroreceptor, structural or geometric – accurately and parsimoniously reconstructs

spontaneous brain activity. We found that the neuroreceptor model outperformed the alternatives

suggesting that greater insight might be gained by shifting the focus from anatomical to

neurochemical factors. Communication between brain regions and maintaining healthy brain

states is reliant on anatomical factors and anatomical changes are associated with

neuropathology, highlighting the importance of anatomical factors[70,71]. Nevertheless, the

neuroreceptor-based framework outperformed the alternatives, suggesting it more effectively

captures the relationship within and between brain regions. A neuroreceptor-based framework

may be better at estimating brain activity since the concentration of neuroreceptors on dendritic

spines can amplify signals from weak structural connections or diminish signals from strong

physical connections estimated from diffusion MRI[72]. Additionally, brain regions that share

similar neuroreceptor and transporter profiles are more likely to exhibit similar patterns in brain

activity since they would presumably respond to the same neuromodulators.

In summary, identifying the neuromodulators that drive brain activity is crucial due to their

central roles in communication, cognition, and pathology. Here, we demonstrated that using

cortical density maps of neuroreceptors and transporters from PET imaging can reveal the

underlying neuroreceptors and transporters underlying spontaneous brain activity. In the process,

the framework revealed a complex network maintaining the excitation-inhibition balance.

Further, this neuroreceptor-based framework can improve our ability to identify neuromodulators

driving brain activity and opens new avenues for exploring dynamical brain activity, identifying

neuropharmacological mechanisms of action and markers of neuropsychiatric disorders. Future

studies can build on these findings to unravel the complex mechanisms that underlie cognition,

and in generating targeted diagnostics and therapies.

Methods

Neuroreceptor Density Maps

The analysis used data originally published in Hansen *et al.*, 2022[19]. In brief, PET tracer imaging was used to map the density for 19 neuroreceptors and transporters. The neuroreceptors include 9 neurotransmitter systems: dopamine (D1, D2, DAT), norepinephrine (NET), serotonin (5-HT1A, 5-HT1B, 5-HT2A, 5-HT4, 5-HT6, 5-HTT), acetylcholine (α4β2, M1, VAChT), glutamate (mGluR5, NMDA), γ-aminobutyric acid (GABAa), histamine (H3), cannabinoid (CB1), and μ-opioid neuroreceptor (MOR). PET images were acquired only from healthy participants ($n = 1,238$; 718 males and 520 females). The images are used to estimate the binding potential and tracer distribution volume which are referred to as receptor densities. PET based estimation methods provide a direct measure of the neuroreceptor and transporter concentration across the cortex than estimates based on transcriptomics[73]. PET images were all registered to the MNI-ICBM 152 non-linear 2009 template and parcellated into the 200 regions according to the Schaefer atlas[20]. Finally, each map corresponding to individual neuroreceptors and transporters were z-score normalized.

Functional MRI Data

HCP Resting-State fMRI Dataset

We used pre-processed resting-state functional MRI (fMRI) data from 48 healthy human participants from the Human Connectome Project (HCP)[21]. We downloaded 50 participants, but two were missing data. In brief, participants underwent four sessions of 15-min resting-state scanning sessions. fMRI volumes were recorded using a customized 3T Siemens Connectome Skyra scanner with an EPI sequence (TR = 0.72 s, TE = 33.1 ms, 72 slices, 2.0 mm isotropic, field of view (FOV) = 208×180 mm). In addition to the pre-processing steps part of the HCP pipeline, we additionally regressed out the global signal, white matter, and cerebral spinal fluid. The data was mapped on Schaefer atlas to derive brain activity for 200 regions of interest because voxel-wise estimates can be unstable and noisy. Group-level functional connectivity (FC) was estimated using the Pearson correlation on the pooled data.

Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) Resting-State fMRI Dataset

The analysis was based on data detailed in Carhart-Harris *et. al.,* 2016[25]. In brief, the analysis

utilized pre-processed fMRI data from 15 participants that underwent 7 minutes of resting-state

fMRI after a placebo and LSD. fMRI data were acquired using a gradient echo planar imaging

sequence, TR/TE = 2000/35ms, field-of-view = 220mm, 64×64 acquisition matrix, parallel

acceleration factor = 2, 90° flip angle and 35 oblique axial slices and 3.4mm^3 voxel size.

Pre-processing steps are detailed in Carhart-Harris *et. al.,* 2016. fMRI data pre-processing

involved de-spiking, slice time correction, motion correction, non-linear registration to 2mm

MNI brain. Additionally, fMRI volumes with frame displacement greater than 0.4mm were

removed. Finally, the functional data were spatially smoothed with a 6mm full-width half max

kernel and band-pass filtering between 0.01 to 0.08 Hz. Finally, 9 nuisance regressors (6 motion-

related and 3 were anatomically-related) and linear and quadratic trends were removed. Subject-

level functional connectivity was estimated using the Pearson correlation.

Modafinil Resting-State fMRI Dataset

The analysis was based on data detailed in Cera *et. al.,* 2014[26]. In brief, the study recruited 26

young male right-handed (as assessed by the Edinburgh Handedness inventory) adults (age

range: 25–35 y.o.). Participants received, in a double-blind fashion, either a single dose of

Modafinil or a placebo pill identical to the drug. The present analysis focused only on 13

participants that received Modafinil.

Resting-state-fMRI BOLD data were separated in three runs lasting four minutes each followed

by high resolution T1 anatomical images. BOLD functional imaging was performed with a

Philips Achieva 3T Scanner (Philips Medical Systems, Best, The Netherlands), using T2*-

weighted echo planar imaging (EPI) free induction decay (FID) sequences and applying the

following parameters: TE 35 ms, matrix size 64×64, FOV 256 mm, in-plane voxel size 4×4 mm,

flip angle 75°, slice thickness 4 mm and no gaps. 140 functional volumes consisting of 30

transaxial slices were acquired per run with a volume TR of 1671 ms. High resolution structural

images were acquired at the end of the three rs-fMRI runs through a 3D MPRAGE sequence

employing the following parameters: sagittal, matrix 256×256, FOV 256 mm, slice thickness 1

mm, no gaps, in-plane voxel size 1 mm×1 mm, flip angle 12°, TR□=□9.7 ms and TE□=□4 ms.

MRI data were preprocessed with the CONN Toolbox[74]. The preprocessed with the following

steps: de-spiking, slice-timing correction, realignment, segmentation, coregistration,

normalization, and spatial smoothing with 8 mm full width half maximum (FWHM). The

preprocessing of the T1-weighted structural images involved skull-removal, normalization into

MNI anatomical standard space, and segmentation into gray matter, white matter, and cerebral

spinal fluid, soft tissues, and air and background. In functional images, all volumes with frame

displacement greater than 0.3 mm were censored and followed by regression of the global signal.

UCLA Consortium for Neuropsychiatric Phenomics Dataset (LA5c)

The Consortium for Neuropsychiatric Phenomics includes imaging of healthy individuals

(N=118 out of 122), individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia (N= 45 out of 50), bipolar

disorder (N=35 out of 37), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (N= 39 out of 40)[34].

Resting-state functional MRI scans were obtained while participants kept their eyes open for 5

minutes in the scanner. Neuroimaging data were acquired on a 3T Siemens Trio scanner. T1-

weighted high-resolution anatomical scans (MPRAGE) were collected with a slice thickness =

1mm, 176 slices, TR=1.9s, TE=2.26ms, matrix=256 x 256, FOV=250mm. Resting-state MRI

data were collected with a T2*-weighted EPI sequence with slice thickness = 4mm, 34 slices,

TR=2s, TE=30ms, flip angle=90°, matrix=64 $\times$ 64, FOV=192mm.

The analysis was based on minimally preprocessed data using FMRIPREP version 0.4.4

(http://fmriprep.readthedocs.io). T1-weighted volume was corrected for bias field using ANTs

N4BiasFieldCorrection v2.1.0 skullstripped and coregistered ICBM 152 Nonlinear

Asymmetrical template. Resting-state data were motion corrected using MCFLIRT v5.0.9.

Functional data was skullstripped and coregistered to the corresponding T1-weighted volume

using boundary-based registration. Motion correcting transformations, transformation to T1-

weighted space and MNI template warp were applied in a single step using

antsApplyTransformations. Framewise displacement and dvars were calculated using Nipype

implementation. In addition to those regressors, global signal and mean white matter signal was

also calculated and removed. Additionally, analysis was conducted only on participants with an

average frame displacement less than 0.5 mm. In total the analysis was based on 118 out of 130

healthy controls, 45 out of 50 participants diagnosed with schizophrenia, 35 out of 49

participants diagnosed with bipolar disorder and 39 out of 43 participants diagnosed with

ADHD. Moreover, in the remaining participants, all individual fMRI volumes with frame

displacement greater than 0.3mm were removed. This dataset was chosen because it

encompasses a diverse range of neuropsychiatric disorders while minimizing the potential

measurement discrepancies that can occur when combining data from multiple sources.

Reconstructing BOLD Time Series, Components and Functional Connectivity from

Neuroreceptor Density Maps

Reconstruction of the BOLD signal was conducted on both the timeseries and principal

components of the BOLD signal. The same method was used for reconstructing the BOLD time

series. Specifically, each of 1,200 fMRI volumes (time points) per participant were reconstructed

from a weighted linear summation of the 19 neuroreceptor and transporter density maps.

Formally, each volume of the BOLD signal is reconstructed as:

$$\Box_{\Box} \ = \ \Box_{\Box} \ + \sum\nolimits_{\Box\ =\ 1}^{19} \beta_j \ \ \Box_{\Box} \qquad\qquad (3)$$

where $\Box_{\Box}$ is the ith BOLD volume. Further, $\Box_{\Box}$ is the spatial density map associated with the jth

neuroreceptor and transporter, $\Box_{\Box}$ is the intercept and $\beta_{\Box}$ is the estimated beta-values for each

neuroreceptor map in the model. Model fitting was performed using *fitlm.m* in Matlab 2021b.

Reconstruction accuracy of the BOLD signal was estimated using the Pearson correlation

between empirical and reconstructed components.

Additionally, we determined if the neuroreceptor-based reconstruction of the BOLD timeseries

preserved the inherent functional connectivity present in resting-state fMRI. To determine the

accuracy in the functional connectivity of the reconstructed BOLD signal, the empirical and

reconstructed BOLD signal was concatenated across participants and Pearson's correlation was

used to estimate the functional connectivity, respectively.

The same framework was applied to the top ten BOLD spatial components in HCP dataset,

LSD, Modafinil and LA5c datasets. For the component analysis, the BOLD data from all

participants was pooled together resulting in 200 x 57,600 data points. Principal components of

the BOLD signal were identified using *pca.m* in Matlab 2021b. Consistent with the terminology

used by Pang et al., 2023, we refer to this process as "reconstruction" to describe the estimation

of BOLD activity from the model[39].

<u>BOLD Reconstruction Null Models</u>

Spatial Permutation Null Model

Reconstruction accuracy was compared to the spatial permutation null model. Specifically, for

each of the 19 neuroreceptor and transporter density maps were spatially permuted and BOLD

component and time series signal was reconstructed from the permuted maps. A total of 1000

permutations were conducted. Additionally, we estimated the functional connectivity from the

reconstructed BOLD signal from the spatial null model by first concatenating the reconstructed

BOLD signal estimated from the spatially permuted null model across participants and Pearson's

correlation was used to estimate the functional connectivity. A total of 1000 permutations were

performed and observed accuracy values greater than the spatial null model at a $P_{spatial} < 0.05$

were considered statistically significant.

Spin Null Model

Additionally, reconstruction accuracy was compared to the spin permuted null model[22]. Spin

permutation, randomized each of the 19 neuroreceptor and transporter density maps but

preserves the distance dependencies between brain regions. Similar to the spatial permutation

null model, BOLD component and time series signal was reconstructed from the spin permuted

maps. In the same manner as the spatial permutation null model, we estimated the functional

connectivity from the reconstructed BOLD signal from the spin null model. A total of 1000

permutations were performed and observed accuracy values greater than the spin null model at a

$P_{spin} < 0.05$ were considered statistically significant.

<u>Neuroreceptor Drive Network Estimation and Network Properties</u>

Estimating Neuroreceptor Drive Network

Neuroreceptor drive network was estimated by correlating the beta-values from the time series

model. The neuroreceptor drive network was estimated from the pooled data across participants.

Clustering of the neuroreceptor drive network was conducted using modularity-maximization[75].

Modularity-maximization does not require the number of clusters to be specified and the

resolution of the clusters was controlled with resolution parameter, $\gamma = 1$. Modularity-

maximization was implemented with the Generalized Louvain algorithm part of the Brain

Connectivity Toolbox[76]. Clustering results from the Generalized Louvain algorithm can be

dependent on the initial seeding. Therefore, clustering was repeated 100x with different initial

seeds, and final clustering results were based on the consensus across iterations[77]. Specifically,

consensus clustering identifies a single representative partition from the set of 100 iterations.

This process involves the creation of a thresholded nodal association matrix which describes how

often nodes were placed in the same cluster. The representative partition is then obtained by

using a Generalized Louvain algorithm to identify clusters within the thresholded nodal

association matrix.

Provincial Hubs

Provincial hubs are nodes in a network that have strong connection within a module[76]. A

provincial hub score for each node was estimated using the within module degree which

quantifies the strength of the connections a node exhibits with other nodes within a module. This

involved first thresholding the network to remove all negative connections. Brain connectivity

toolbox was used to estimate provincial hub scores[76]. Within-module z-score can me estimated

as:

$$z_i = \frac{k_i(m_i) - \bar{k}(m_i)}{\sigma^{k(m_i)}} \tag{4}$$

where m_i is the module containing node i, $k_i(m_i)$ is the within-module degree of i, and $\bar{k}(m_i)$ and

$\sigma^{k(m_i)}$ are the mean and standard deviation.

Connector Hubs

Connector hubs are nodes that link modules. A connector hub score was estimated for each node

using participation coefficient (PC) as:

$$PC_i = 1 - \sum_{m \in M} \left(\frac{k_i(m)}{k_i} \right)^2 \tag{5}$$

where M is the set of modules, and $k_i(m)$ is the strength of connection between i and all nodes in

module m. As with the provincial hubs, the neuroreceptor network was first thresholded to

remove all negative connections. Brain Connectivity Toolbox was used to estimate participation

coefficient and values were z-score normalized[76].

Statistical Testing of Hub Properties

Statistical significance for both provincial and connector hub scores was based on comparison to

a null model. Specifically, a degree persevering permutation was utilized to randomize the

neuroreceptor network prior to estimating the provincial and connector hub scores from the null

model. A total of 1000 permutations were performed and empirical hub scores that were greater

than the null model at a $P_{perm} < 0.05$ were considered statistically significant.

Neuroreceptors Underlying LSD, Modafinil and Neuropsychiatric Illness Induced Changes

To identify the neuroreceptors and transporters contributing to changes in brain activity

following LSD, Modafinil, and in underlying neuropsychiatric conditions, we determined the

neuroreceptors and transporters mediating these effects. The key analytical step involved

identifying a modulatory network, M, that transforms the neuroreceptor drive network from state

p to state q. The relationship can be expressed mathematically as:

$$\square_\square = \square_\square \bullet \square \quad\quad\quad (1)$$

Critically, all diagonal elements in D are set to zero ensuring that the neuroreceptor and

transporter does not activate itself in the framework. $\square$ can be determined by solving:

$$\square = \square\square\square (\square_\square) \bullet \square_\square \quad\quad\quad (2)$$

The neuroreceptors driving the modulations can be identified by decomposing $\square$ using PCA.

Moreover, the same analysis was used to gain insight into the neuroreceptor(s) and transporter(s)

underlying Modafinil and neuropsychiatric illness.

The modulatory network, M, can fit any difference in the neuroreceptor drive networks even if

the underlying differences are simply noise. Statistical significance was based on randomizing

M, generating a random modulatory network, M_{rand} in a degree preserving manner. Randomizing

the empirically derived M ensures that inherent properties such as the mean and standard

deviation of M are preserved in M_{rand}. Once M_{rand} is estimated, it is decomposed using PCA and

the variance explained by each component is compared to M. The modulation values associated

with each neuroreceptor, and transporter are compared. A total of 1000 permutations are

performed and the principal component and neuroreceptors and transporters in the empirically

derived M that deviate from M_{rand} at probability of $P_{perm} < 0.05$ are considered to be statistically

significant.

<u>Model Comparison: Structural and Cortical Geometric Eigenmodes</u>

Structural Connectivity and Structural Eigenmodes

Preprocessed diffusion weighted images for each of the 48 participants part of the HCP were

used to construct structural connectomes. Specifically, fiber tracking was done using DSI Studio

with a modified FACT algorithm[78]. Data were reconstructed using generalized q-sampling

imaging (GQI) in MNI space. Fiber tracking was performed until 250,000 streamlines were

reconstructed with default parameters. For each participant, an undirected weighted structural

connectivity matrix, A, was constructed from the connection strength based on the number of

streamlines connecting two regions. Connectivity matrix was normalized by dividing the number

of streamlines (T) between region i and j, by the combined volumes (v) of region i and j:

$$A_{ij} = \frac{T_{ij}}{v_i + v_j} \tag{6}$$

Group structural connectivity was estimated by averaging all the individual structural

connectivity networks together.

In accordance with Naze *et al.*, 2021, structural eigenmodes were estimated from the normalized

graph Laplacian of the structural network as:

$$L = \frac{1}{2}[(D - A) + (D - A)^T] \tag{7}$$

where A is the adjacency matrix of the group-level structural connectome and D is the degree

matrix[79]. The graph Laplacian L is then decomposed into a finite number of eigenvalues λ_i and

eigenvectors, ψ_i :

$$L\psi_i = \lambda\psi_i \tag{8}$$

Cortical Geometric Eigenmodes

Cortical eigenmodes capture how the anatomy constrains brain dynamics. The analysis relies on cortical modes derived in Pang et. al., 2023[39]. In brief, cortical eigenmodes are estimated from the midthickness surface mesh part of the FreeSurfer's fsaverage population-averaged template. Local vertex-to-vertex spatial relations and curvature are modeled using the Laplace–Beltrami operator from the surface mesh, and from which the eigenmodes are estimated. Each eigenmode comprises spatial patterns with a specific wavelength.

Comparing Reconstruction Models

To compare the reconstruction models, we use the first 10 principal components of the BOLD signal. Specifically, each component is reconstructed using structural and geometric eigenmodes by sequentially adding modes to the model until the reconstruction accuracy of the models equals the accuracy obtained with the neuroreceptor-based model. Structural- or cortical geometric-based reconstructions were deemed to outperform if fewer modes were required to achieve the save accuracy as the neuroreceptor-based framework.

Data Availability

Minimally pre-processed Human Connectome Project data can be downloaded from https://www.humanconnectome.org/. Neuroreceptor composition data can be obtained at https://github.com/netneurolab/hansen_receptors. LSD dataset can be obtained at https://openneuro.org/datasets/ds003059/versions/1.0.0. Modafinil dataset can be obtained at https://openneuro.org/datasets/ds000133/versions/00001. UCLA Consortium for Neuropsychiatric Phenomics Dataset can be downloaded at https://openfmri.org/dataset/ds000030/. The brain connectivity toolbox can be downloaded at https://sites.google.com/site/bctnet/. Cortical geometric eigenmode data can be obtained at https://osf.io/xczmp/.

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