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Scientist-magician team probing brain mechanisms underlying attention, awareness

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Washington, August 20 (ANI): U.S. scientists have joined forces with world-famous magicians to discover the brain mechanisms that underlie attention and awareness.

Dr. Stephen Macknik and Dr. Susana Martinez-Conde, two neuroscientists at Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, believe that this collaboration may benefit the fields of education and medical rehabilitation by using magical techniques to help treat ADHD, Alzheimer's disease and brain trauma.

"Magicians have developed powerful cognitive principles and intuitions about attention and awareness that are not understood scientifically. We've been able to learn more about cognition from magicians who have developed illusions that trick audiences," says Dr. Martinez-Conde.

The scientists have studied how magicians mix humor into their performances because a laughing audience is unable to pay attention to the magician's hand.

They have also determined that there are various levels of misdirection that magicians use to trick an audience.

The insights, which were previously unknown, suggest that humour and misdirection may help manipulate levels of attention.

"The collaboration on this project has led to many exciting insights to help us understand the brain's underlying cognition," says Dr. Martinez-Conde.

The magicians associated with the project include James Randi (The Amazing Randi), Teller (of Penn & Teller), Apollo Robbins, Mac King, and John Thomson (The Great Tomsoni). (ANI)

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