Amygdala not actually brain's 'fear center'

I've been studying the amygdala for more than 30 years. When I started this work, research on this brain region was a lonely field of inquiry. The hippocampus was all the rage, and I sometimes felt jealous of the attention lavished on this brain region because of its contribution to memory. These days, though, it is the amygdala that is in the spotlight. This little neural nugget has gone from an obscure area of the brain to practically a household word, one that has come to be synonymous with "fear." And for many people, my name, too, is practically synonymous with "fear." I am often said to have identified the amygdala as the brain's "fear" center. But the fact is, I have not done this, nor has anyone else.

The idea that the amygdala is the home of fear in the brain is just that—an idea. It is not a scientific finding but instead a conclusion based on an interpretation of a finding.

Brain imaging studies of healthy humans (people without brain damage) have found that when they are exposed to threats, neural activity in the amygdala increases and body responses (like sweating or increased heart rate) result. This is true even if the threatening stimuli are presented subliminally, such that the person is not consciously aware that the threat is present and does not consciously experience (feel) "fear." Amygdala activity does not mean that fear is experienced.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: The Amygdala Is NOT the Brain's Fear Center