

Richard J. O'Brien is the Disque Deane University Professor and Chairman of the Department of Neurology at Duke.

Dr O'Brien has made significant contributions to the understanding of the biology of glutamate receptors at excitatory synapses in the brain and, more recently, to the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease. His investigations in Alzheimer's disease pathophysiology have led to critical new insight into the role of the amyloid peptide and cerebrovascular pathology in the etiology of dementia and the role of normal aging in diseases of the brain. As testament to his research achievements, O'Brien had maintained continuous funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) from 1999 to 2015. More recently, in conjunction with the Department of Neurobiology at Duke, Dr. O'Brien's research has included a significant effort toward understanding how to unlock the secrets of brain plasticity (the ability to adapt to change), so evident in the brains of children but lacking in older adults, as a means of preventing and treating a variety of brain disorders.

Dr. O'Brien received his undergraduate degree, MD and PhD at Harvard University. He completed his residency in internal medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital and a residency in neurology at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He was Professor of Neurology, Neurobiology and Medicine at Johns Hopkins and was Chairman of the Department of Neurology at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center and Associate Dean for Research at Johns Hopkins before coming to Duke to be the inaugural chair of the Department of Neurology. While at Hopkins Dr O'Brien directed the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging Autopsy Program and was a leader in the BIOCARD study and the Johns Hopkins ADRC.