Message From the Chair

Welcome to this issue of our department quarterly newsletter, covering October - December 2021.

Another Test of our Mettle

Just when we thought COVID-19 was receding, another powerful wave struck in the form of the Omicron variant. While Omicron, which has rapidly become the dominant strain, seems less severe than Delta, it is highly contagious and has infected growing numbers of our patients as well as many members of the BCM family. The resulting staffing shortages has meant more work and stress for existing providers and the need in some cases to take on added responsibilities to fill in for those who contracted the coronavirus. This has proven another test of our resilience, and I am pleased to observe that our faculty, learners, and staff continue to demonstrate their dedication to patient care in the face of new and ongoing challenges.

Although the pandemic has also impacted our clinical, educational, and research missions, we can see from this edition of the newsletter how well we have adapted (e.g., migrating more to remote learning and conducting virtual clinical assessments where possible). For example, our Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship has filled all of its eight slots at a time when many other programs are struggling to recruit qualified Fellows. On the research front, our extramural research grant funding has expanded significantly, and we have onboarded new research faculty. The quality of our scholarly and research activities can also be gauged by the large number of high-impact articles our faculty and learners have published in the last quarter of 2021.

In South Africa, where Omicron was first reported, the virus blazed through the country like a wild fire and then dissipated almost as quickly as it first spread. Let us hope that the course will be similar here and that by February it will be receding.

One of the lessons of Omicron is the benefit of a booster. We can all expect this third shot to become mandatory at BCM as it does add protection.

—Wayne Goodman, M.D.
Dr. Swann Honored with New Endowed Chair

Congratulations to Alan Swann, M.D., who was recently honored with the Linda and John Griffin Endowed Chair.

Swann is a professor at BCM and a staff psychiatrist at Houston VA Medical Center.

Swann has conducted extensive research combining clinical, neurophysiological, pharmacological, and human laboratory strategies to understand roles of impulsivity and catecholamine function in addictive disorders, cluster B personality disorders, and all phases of bipolar disorder.

Dr. Dawson Featured for DEI Research Award

Darius Dawson, M.D., was featured in September’s VA Research Currents as one of the first of 10 recipients of the VA Office of Research and Development’s (ORD) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Research Awards. These awards match early-career investigators with established researchers who have funded ORD grants.

Dr. Shah: The Alliance Board

The Alliance elected Asim Shah, M.D., professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and chief of Psychiatry at Ben Taub Hospital, as Chair of the Board of Directors for a two-year term.

This nonprofit creates opportunities for refugees, immigrants, and underserved residents to achieve their goals for self-sufficiency and improve their quality of life.

Dr. Patel: New TMS Director

Baylor Psychiatry Clinic has appointed Shirali Patel, M.D., as Director of Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) Services.

In this role she will oversee the clinical TMS program, collaborate with TMS research initiatives in the department, and lead the expansion of this service for Baylor and the greater Houston community.

TMS is an FDA-approved therapy for the treatment of medication-resistant major depressive disorder.

ADAA Physician Appointments

Sanjay Mathew, M.D., professor and Vice Chair of Research, will serve as Chief Medical Officer of Anxiety and DepressionAssociation of America (ADAA), based on election by the board.

ADAA also selected Nicholas Murphy, M.D. for the Career Development Leadership Program, which is a training opportunity for early career scientists to engage with a network of researchers studying depression and anxiety. The goal is to build connections that lead to creative research studies through collaboration. ADAA also will provide funding for Murphy to attend meetings and sponsor his membership.

Submit quarterly honors and awards to Vicki.Powers@bcm.edu
Awards

TMA Poster Award for Cross-Functional Baylor Team

A team across Baylor College of Medicine earned a top spot in the “Most Original” poster category at Texas Medical Association’s Annual Physician Health & Wellness Exchange Conference.

The poster shared the impact of the project supporting healthcare workers and scientists during the first surge of COVID-19. It was titled: “COVID-19 Support Task Force: How the community and Baylor came together to care for frontline workers during the pandemic.”

The team included Peggy H. Yang, Ph.D. (Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences), Jesse Gavin (HR), Katherine Holtman (Communications) and Toi B. Harris, M.D. (Institutional Diversity & Student Services), Michael McClam, M.D., also served on the Task Force Committee.

AAAP Poster Award: Accidental Overdose Deaths

American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) selected a poster by Daryl Shorter, M.D.; Namrata Walia, M.D. M.H.A.; and Varsha Podduturi, M.D. as a 2021 AAAP Annual Meeting and Scientific Symposium Poster Award Winner.

The poster, “Methamphetamine and Other Associated Drugs as Cause of Accidental Overdose Deaths in Harris County, TX (2016-20),” was presented in December at AAAP annual meeting.

Honors for Dr. Moukaddam

Nidal Moukaddam, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor, was named to Houston Business Journal’s 2021 “Women Who Mean Business: Healthcare” category. The 78 nominees are women in leadership roles who have demonstrated excellent in their careers and community.

Dr. Moukaddam also was invited to join the Editorial Board of Psychiatric Times. She will be editing a monthly series showcasing the intricacies of clinical psychiatry called Tales from the Clinic: The Art of Psychiatry.

Nidal Moukaddam, M.D., Ph.D.
Menninger Clinic Selects Presidential Research/Innovation Scholars

Menninger Clinic selected four team members to pursue projects addressing critical issues in mental health through research and innovation as Presidential Research and Innovation Scholars, thanks to pilot funding. These scholars -- Patricia Daza, Ph.D.; Marie Fletcher, R.N.; Hyuntaek Oh, Ph.D.; and Ramiro Salas, Ph.D. -- will work to develop breakthrough solutions in better preventing suicide, improving treatment of opioid addiction, and reducing stigma of electroconvulsive therapy.

Dr. Mathew Receives Highly Cited Researcher Honor

Sanjay Mathew, M.D., vice chair for Research, professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and director of the Anxiety and Mood Disorders program, is one of nine BCM faculty named in the Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list for 2021. This honor recognizes those with multiple highly-cited papers that rank in the top 1% by citations for field and year. The organization considers Highly Cited Researchers truly one in 1,000 of the world’s scientists and social scientists.

Dr. Abdallah Earns Neuropsychopharmacology Award

Chadi Abdallah, M.D., associate professor of Psychiatry, earned Neuropsychopharmacology Editors’ Award for a Transformative Original Report. The award recognizes the top original article published in Neuropsychopharmacology the previous year. His paper was titled, “Modulation of the antidepressant effects of ketamine by the mTORC1 inhibitor rapamycin.” American College of Neuropsychopharmacology presented the honor at their annual meeting in Puerto Rico, December 2021.

Dr. Contreras Earns EM Award

Valeria Contreras, M.D., earned the BCM EM Distinguished Attending Consultant Award for 2021 in the Emergency Department. This award was given based on recommendations from the EM faculty, residents, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners out of all the consultants who work with the Emergency Department team.

Dr. Ribas Roca: Faculty Award

Jose Ribas Roca, M.D., assistant professor, earned the Early Career Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care. Faculty are recognized for their outstanding contributions to the College’s clinical mission.
It is with great excitement we highlight some of the incredible work our faculty, staff, and trainees have been doing to address issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion throughout our community and within the department. This quarterly spotlight is an opportunity to shine a light and acknowledge this work and people engaging in it, as well as create new initiatives and collaborations across affiliates and throughout the department.

-- Dr. John Saunders, Vice Chair Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Multicultural and Diversity Sub-committee Committee of Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Psychology Training Program

**Training Director:** Ellen J. Teng, Ph.D.

**Chair:** Angelic D. Chaison, Ph.D.

**Faculty Members:** Bethany Aiena, Ph.D., Sarah Beckwith, Ph.D., Kevin Siffert, Ph.D., and Sharanya Udipi, Ph.D.

**Psychology Trainee Members (2021-2022):** Dahyeon Kim, Ph.D. & Namrata Nanavaty, M.S.

The Multicultural and Diversity Sub-committee Committee (MDSC) of Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (MEDVAMC) Psychology Training Program consists of a group of racially and ethnically diverse psychology faculty and trainee members.

Created in 2009 under the leadership of Angelic D. Chaison, Ph.D., the MDSC has focused on providing quality diversity education and training to psychology interns, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty. The MDSC offers a variety of learning opportunities within psychology training, including didactic seminars and presentations on local and national platforms, experiential learning activities, journal club discussions, a mentoring program, and much more. The committee’s work, however, does not stop with psychology training. The MDSC has been instrumental in hosting hospital-wide diversity conferences and training events on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in collaboration with the Equal Employment Opportunity office, Social Work service, and Nursing at the MEDVAMC.

True to the advocacy nature of DEI work, the MDSC also actively disseminates its diversity efforts to the broader training community through presentations at national conferences in multiple locations (e.g., New Orleans, San Antonio, Houston, and Orlando) as well as publications. The efforts of the MDSC have been hailed as “best practice” during APA site visit reviews, and the committee continues to take diversity training to new levels as the field of multicultural education evolves.
The OCD research team is working on a new study to collect the world’s largest ancestrally-diverse sample of OCD cases (N = 5,000 Latin American individuals). The Latin American Trans-Ancestry Initiative for OCD Genomics (LATINO) features international collaborations with OCD clinics in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru. It also partners with clinics in the United States including Houston, Miami, New Jersey, San Diego, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Members of the study team include Dr. Eric Storch (PI), Dr. Wayne Goodman, Dr. Anthony Zoghbi, Dr. Andrew Guzick, Dr. Elizabeth Atkinson, Andrew Wiese, Sarah Sarvi, Olivia Morris, Mauricio Yanez, and Ethan Schweissing. Dr. Jim Crowley at University of North Carolina also is a PI on the team.

This monumental study will address the current Latino representation gap in OCD genetic research by conducting a wide-scale OCD genomic study with robust phenotyping.

The study team hopes increased representation of Latin American individuals will advance the ability to detect, diagnose, and treat individuals of Latino ancestry using precision medicine.

Six Researchers in Department Recognized: Top 2% Worldwide

Our department is honored to share that six of our researchers made the list of top 2% of scientists most frequently cited worldwide, based on a 2021 report published in PLoS Biology:

- Wayne Goodman, M.D.
- Tom Kosten, M.D.
- John Oldham, M.D.
- Sanjay Mathew, M.D.
- Laura Marsh, M.D.
- Ricardo Jorge, M.D.

The list of highly cited researchers featured in PLoS Biology were determined using updated metrics initially developed at Stanford University in collaboration with Elsevier. It includes not only medical researchers but also scientists across all disciplines: math, engineering, chemistry, and physics.

New Grants: Youth Autism and Anxiety, Polygenic Risk Scores

Dr. Eric Storch, professor and vice chair of Psychiatry, and Dr. Andrew Guzick, assistant professor of Psychiatry, received an R34 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) for more than $700,000. Together with colleagues from University of North Carolina and the Harris Center (Dr. Rinita Roberts), they will examine the feasibility, preliminary effectiveness, and sustainability of a cognitive behavioral therapy program tailored for youth with autism spectrum disorder and anxiety treated in community clinics.

Storch also received $2.5 million for a four-year study from NIMH for the ethical, clinical, and legal implementations of polygenic risk scores in child and adolescent psychiatry.
BCM Anti-Human Trafficking Program Trains World Countries

Impacting Global Health and Building Strong International Partnerships

The Baylor College of Medicine Anti-Human Trafficking program (AHTP) trained 28 countries in San Antonio, Texas, in December 2021, on strategies to mitigate human trafficking. Usually closer to 60 countries attend, but COVID-19 travel restrictions kept Africa and some Asian countries from traveling.

This team partners with the Defense Institute for Medical Operations (DIMO), a nonprofit provider of global health education in the U.S. Department of Defense. The goal is to impact global health and build strong international partnerships through world-class, hands-on medical training courses.

The presentation was a true collaborative effort with input from the entire AHTP team including Mollie Gordon, M.D.; Phuong Nguyen, Ph.D.; Melissa Torres, M.D.; Katie Robicheaux, LCSW; Nicole White, M.D. (post doc fellow), and John Coverdale, M.D.

Gordon says the goal is to continue to build capacity with governments and healthcare systems globally to mitigate trafficking in vulnerable populations through a public health lens.

“We made contact with 15% of the global leaders this week,” Gordon relates. “Our ultimate goal is to use our training in every country on the globe, which is ambitious, I know!”

Another bonus is other military healthcare leaders enjoyed Baylor’s presentation and asked the team to contribute to Global Health Course Certificate as teaching faculty for Uniformed Services Military for the U.S. --by Vicki Powers
Texas Child Health Access through Telemedicine (TCHATT) Helps Children and Families in Need During the Pandemic

Baylor Psychiatrists, Therapists Provide Counseling in Schools Through Telemedicine

The Texas Legislature provided $100 million for the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium in 2019 to expand access to care for at-risk children and adolescents in Texas. This past fall, the legislature saw evidence of success and continued funding for another two years. Our Baylor Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences is one of 12 participating health-related institutions in Texas.

“It’s a two-year program that we hope will last for years and decades to come,” says Laurel Williams, D.O., professor and state medical director for TCHATT and CPAN, two programs in the consortium.

The idea was created in the wake of Hurricane Harvey and the Santa Fe school shooting to improve Texas’ mental health care system relying on expertise from the state’s academic medical centers.

This article will focus on just one of the five areas in the consortium: Texas Child Health Access through Telemedicine (TCHATT). This program provides free services right in the schools for children who need urgent care by a mental health provider. School counselors refer students to the program, and TCHATT staff reach out to the family. If interested, a child/adolescent psychiatrist or therapist provides short-term intervention (5-7 visits) via telehealth to the student. It is not geared to those in crisis.

Baylor provides seven psychiatrists and eight masters-level therapists -- in varying amounts of time -- to the program as a result of consortium funding. It kicked off in May 2020, at a time when schools were virtual, and personnel couldn’t provide recommendations on who needed help. In the last year-and-a-half, Baylor’s referrals have increased steadily. Since August 2020, Baylor has made 2,051 TCHATT encounters: 643 intake sessions and 1,408 return appointments (Figure 1).

Based on a sampling of 971 referred students, anxiety (53%) and depression (45%) were the most common reasons for referrals (Figure 2). Suicidal ideation and self-harm both were prevalent at 19%. More than one category could be selected.

Program Success

Amy Goetz, Ph.D., clinical director of TCHATT and assistant professor, is proud of the program’s ability to form relationships with school districts across southeast region. It’s available to ~240,000 students across 10 school districts and 1 charter school.

“We are continuing to expand and have seen tremendous growth through simple word of mouth about our program,” Goetz relates.

Research illustrates the positive aspects of allowing students to walk down the hall to attend a telehealth visit with a mental health professional including decreased absenteeism, increased academic achievement, reductions in anxiety/depression, and ability to reach historically neglected populations.

But Goetz is thrilled to share anecdotal success, as well, as parents share feedback on surveys.

“One parent told us the services have been life-saving,” Goetz relates. “It feels great to know we are helping to make a difference.”

-- by Vicki Powers
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In the News

Mental Health Decline in Kids Potential Reason for Increase in Violence
KPRC Channel2 interviews Dr. Asim Shah
September 29, 2021

True Crime Drama, Murder Mystery Podcasts: Fascination Revealed
KPRC Channel2 interviews Dr. Asim Shah
October 29, 2021

A ‘Pacemaker for the Brain’: No Treatment Helped Her Depression, Until This
New York Times, 10/4/2021

Next Generation of Deep Brain Stimulation Aims to Tackle Depression: Case Studies Spotlight Personalized Approaches
Science, 11/22/2021

Electrical/Behavioral Signals in OCD Could Guide Adaptive Therapy
Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News, 12/10/21

BCM Press Releases:
Novel Brain Stimulation Approach Treats Severe Depression
Brain Stimulation Device Enables New Understanding of OCD

VA Grants: Department of Psychiatry (primary affiliation)

Lynette Averill: Structural and Functional Neural Alterations in Suicidality Among Veterans

Tony Ecker: Addressing Mental Health Comorbidities; Integrated CBT to Improve Functioning

Ricardo Jorge: Adaptive Clinical Trial for Insomnia in Veterans with PTSD

Growth Hormone Replacement Therapy in Veterans with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and Adult Growth Hormone

Translational Research Center for TBI and Stress Disorders (TRACTS)

Multisite RCT of STEP-Home: A Transdiagnostic Skill-Based Community Reintegration Workshop

Terri Fletcher: Exposure and Response Prevention to Improve Functioning in Veterans with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Marijn Lijffijt: VA Seed - Neurofilament Light in Cerebrospinal Fluid as a Biomarker of Neurodegeneration in 1990-1991 Gulf War Veterans with Gulf War Illness

Ramiro Salas: Brain Connectivity and Genetics as Predictors of Opioid Abuse Treatment Outcomes

Karin Thompson: Manage Emotions to Reduce Aggression-- MERA: A Brief Aggression Treatment for Veterans with PTSD Symptoms

Ellen Teng: Improving Veteran Functioning with Intensive Transdiagnostic CBT for Anxiety
Making a Difference at Walk to End Alzheimer’s

Walk to End Alzheimer's is an important annual event for the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. This year the department’s team, Baylor Memory Walkers, gathered a large crew who raised nearly $36,000 towards this disease. Dr. Mark Kunik lead the team and accepted Baylor’s 2021 Leadership Award.

The College, as a whole, registered the largest Walk to End Alzheimer’s group with 28 teams, 385 walkers raising more than $81,000.

BCM and the Houston Alzheimer’s Association are partnering in the U.S. POINTER study as the only Texas research site. BCM has received nearly $5 million in Alzheimer’s and dementia research grants from the Alzheimer’s Association since 1996.
Resident Life: Wellness Retreat

The Wellness Initiative is an important part of the BCM psychiatry residency program to provide opportunities for a healthy work/life balance.

In the fall, residents enjoyed time together for Fall Retreat – with costumes to boot!


**Publications**


**Publications are self-reported. Please submit your publications to vicki.powers@bcm.edu**

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**Presentations**

**James Lomax, M.D.,** professor of Psychiatry and Karl Menninger Chair of Psychiatric Education:

- Rice University Psychology careers panel to 200 Rice students with an interest in psychology/mental health/medicine.
- Co-facilitated a Round Table Discussion titled “Into the Fog: Dementia Patients and Their Family Caregivers” in December 2021 for the Center for Psychoanalytic Studies’ Alumni Group.
- 30th Psychotherapy and Faith Conference in a presentation titled “Turning the Lens Inward: Clinical Translations Conversation” with Kenneth Pargament. The session focused on how the faith experiences of the therapist influences their practice of therapy.

**Jose Antonio Ribas-Roca, M.D.,** assistant professor:


**Michelle A Patriquin, Ph.D.,** associate professor, Menninger Clinic:

- University of Houston FemTech Innovation Competition. Invited presentation at the annual innovation competition at University of Houston. Houston, TX, October 2021.
- International Academy of Suicide Research/American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, October 2021. International Suicide Summit on Suicide Research.
Virtual Conference. Objective monitoring via wearables: Uncovering an opportunity to improve suicide outcomes for inpatient psychiatry.

**Terri Fletcher, Ph.D.,** associate professor, VAMC:


**Thanh Thuy Truong, M.D.,** assistant professor, BCM and psychiatrist at Menninger Clinic, presented a paper on cariprazine for methamphetamine use disorder at the AAAP conference December 2021.

**Presentations are self-reported. Please submit your presentations to vicki.powers@bcm.edu**