



# Department of Psychiatry Chair Letter

News & Views about the Department of Psychiatry

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**Our Mission: To improve the mental health of our citizens through education, research, advocacy and innovative clinical care.**

## From the Chairman

### Special points of interest:

- *Chair's Letter*
- *HR 1005*
- *Conference "Down Under"*
- *Wellcome Grant*
- *Merit Grant*
- *Pet Therapy*
- *Honors & Awards*
- *Publications*
- *Chief Residents 2008-2009*
- *New Faces*



This has been a year with significant change and improvement in our programs. Congratulations to Dr. Bela Sood for her excellent work on the Virginia Tech Commission and to Dr. Isaac Wood for being appointed VCU School of Medicine Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. Ike's promotion came after a vigorous search with over twenty internal and external candidates.

There will be a major infusion of support to expand the Psychiatry research at the Virginia Institute of Psychiatric & Behavioral Genetics over the next three years.

We have recruited an excellent PGY1 residency class. USMLE scores for PGY1 have increased each year for the past three years. This July we will fill our first Residency Research Training Track position by hiring Yongyue Chen, who has an M.D. from West China University and a Ph.D. from the University of Texas.

We have just received official approval to start our 'Honors Program in Psychiatry for Medical Students' and completed a careful external review of our residency program by nationally recognized psychiatric educator Dr. Joel Yager.

We continue to focus on recruiting a new chair for our Division of Addiction Psychiatry and a new Chief of Service for the Mental Health Service Line at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veteran's Medical Center.

Dr. Bob Schneider will be leaving his role as Chair of the Division of Ambulatory Psychiatry. The good news is he is staying with the department and will be teaching as a member of our faculty at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veteran's Medical Center. I am pleased to announce

that Dr. Randy Thomas has graciously consented to serve as Interim Chair.

Kudos go to our Inpatient and Emergency Room faculty for rapidly and effectively increasing the number of morning discharges, increasing the number of patients admitted to Inpatient and reducing Emergency Room diversion.

Both Drs. Susan Williams-White and Roxanne Roberson-Nay have received K Awards from the National Institutes of Health. K Awards are difficult to obtain and represent significant recognition for outstanding accomplishment. Dr. Kenneth Kendler was awarded a \$5,000,000/10 year Merit award from the NIAAA to study "An Alcohol Affected Sib Pair Study of Alcohol Dependence."

Departmental graduation will take place at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Education and Library Complex Auditorium, 1800 Lakeside Avenue beginning with cocktails at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. and diploma ceremony at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, June 11, 2008.

### Inside this issue:

"Down Under"	2
Pet Therapy	2
Chief Residents	2
Depression Genetics	3
Merit Grant	3
New Faces	4
News	4

## May is Borderline Personality Disorder Month

### House Resolution 1005

*In the House of Representatives, U. S.—4/1/08.*

Whereas borderline personality disorder (BPD) affects the regulation of emotion and afflicts approximately 2 percent of the general population;

Whereas BPD is a leading cause of suicide, as an estimated 10 percent of individuals with this disorder take their own lives;

Whereas BPD usually manifests itself in adolescence and early adulthood;

Whereas symptoms of BPD include self-injury; rage; substance abuse; destructive impulsiveness; a pattern of

unstable emotions, self-image, and relationships; and may result in suicide;

Whereas BPD is inheritable and is exacerbated by environmental factors;

Whereas official recognition of BPD is relatively new, and diagnosing it is often impeded by lack of awareness and frequent co-occurrence with other conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, substance abuse, anxiety, and eating disorders;

Whereas despite its prevalence, enormous public health costs, and the devastating toll it takes on individuals, families, and communities, BPD only recently has begun to command the attention it requires;

Whereas it is essential to increase awareness of BPD among people suffering from

this disorder, their families, mental health professionals, and the general public by promoting education, research, funding, early detection, and effective treatments; and

Whereas the National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder and the National Alliance on Mental Illness have requested that Congress designate May as Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness Month as a means of educating our Nation about this disorder, the needs of those suffering from it, and its consequences: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved,* That the House of Representatives supports the goals and ideals of Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness Month.

## Third International Congress on Women's Mental Health



Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Professor of Psychiatry and Obstetrics-Gynecology and Executive Director of the Mood Disorders Institute and the Institute for Women's Health, recently served as Scientific Program Chair for the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress on Women's Mental Health, which was held in Melbourne, Australia March 17-20, 2008. At the Congress, Dr. Kornstein was a keynote speaker and was installed as President of the International Association for Women's Mental Health, which sponsors the Congress.

Congress participants came from 50 countries, including many from the Pacific Rim. Keynote presentations by 15 international experts were divided into 7 themes: international perspectives on women's mental health, women's mental health in the perinatal period, estrogens and women's mental health, interface with other specialties, women's mental health in the menopausal transition, women's mental health in times of conflict and disaster, and advances in

the management of mood disorders in women.



Pictured above left to right: Dr. Susan Kornstein, President, IAWMH, Dr. Helen Herrman, (WHO), Dr. Donna Stewart, Past President IAWMH, Dr. Marta Rondon, Secretary, IAWMH

Symposia dealt with a diversity of topics in keeping with the theme that women's mental health is inextricably linked to their physical, psychosocial, and cultural contexts. Topics included international perspectives on sexual and reproductive rights and mental health; objectification in eating disorders; women's mental health in refugee, immigrant and displaced persons; drug abuse treatments from lab

to clinic; hormones, mood, sleep and cognition; the Australian longitudinal study on women's mental health; women in war and disasters; culture as a rationalization for abuse of women; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in girls; multiple perspectives on abortion; and the implication of culture on women's mental health. VCU was recently ranked in the top 20 in U.S. News & World Report for the second consecutive year in the area of Women's Health.

Pictured below left to right: Dr. Susan Kornstein, Dr. Donna Stewart, Canada, Dr. Shona Sturgeon, South Africa, Dr. Unaiza Niaz, Pakistan, Dr. Anita Reicher, Switzerland, Dr. Helen Herrman, Australia, Dr. Marta Rondon, Peru.



## Dr. Sandra Barker — Pet Therapy at VCU



Ellie & Patient

Housed in the Department of Psychiatry, The Center for Human-Animal Interaction (CHAI) was established in the VCU School of Medicine in June 2001. It is the first center of its kind to be established in a school of medicine in the nation. The mission of the Center is improved health and well-being through human-animal interaction. As an interdisciplinary center, CHAI provides a structure for faculty, students, and staff from both campuses to collaborate on research, educational, and clinical activities that support its mission. CHAI has been recognized internationally for its pioneering efforts in these areas.

CHAI's most visible program is Dogs On Call (DOC), our animal-assisted therapy and pet visitation program in the VCU Medical Center that operates in collaboration with the Volunteer Services Office. Certified therapy dogs and their volunteer owners visit patients, visitors, and staff throughout the Medical

Center. An M-IV elective with the Center is popular with medical students who formed their own chapter of Dogs On Call. Center research documents the health benefits of DOC visits including reductions in patient anxiety and fear and reductions in staff cortisol levels. A health system-wide needs assessment found most units desire DOC visits, and an evaluation conducted on the pediatric units found numerous benefits perceived by patients and their families.

CHAI operates entirely on donations and with assistance from many talented volunteers. Our Close at Heart fund was developed to honor living or deceased pets or those who love them. The annual Dogs On Call calendar sales and participation in the CVC help support our programs. We have been fortunate to receive research support from The Iams Company, NIH, and anonymous donors. The Center website is at [www.chai.vcu.edu](http://www.chai.vcu.edu) for more information.

## Chief Residents for 2008-2009

### Chief Residents: Christine (Neal) Baker, M.D.



Dr. Christine Baker was born in Virginia, lived in Brazil until 13; grew up in Tennessee; Indiana University Bachelor's degree in music; graduated University of Wisconsin Medical School, residency in Ob/Gyn at University of Illinois Chicago; practiced Ob/Gyn for 12 years in Southwest VA. Hopes to have therapy-oriented practice in Richmond area. E-mail: [cneal2@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:cneal2@mcvh-vcu.edu)

**Maxwell Senu-Oke, M.D.**—Dr. Maxwell Senu-Oke was born in Dayton, Ohio, but grew up around the states and overseas. Undergrad school was University of West Alabama in Livingston, Alabama, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine for medical school and



he plans to go into Forensic Psychiatry. E-mail: [msenu-oke@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:msenu-oke@mcvh-vcu.edu).



**Eugene Sun, M.D.**— Dr. Eugene Sun was born and raised until age 12 in Taiwan. Immigrated to U.S. at age 13. An only child, he did his undergrad studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison (go Badgers!) After residency is completed he wants to remain involved in academia alongside private group practice. E-mail: [esun@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:esun@mcvh-vcu.edu).

**Junior Chief Residents: Ama Arthur, M.D.**— Dr. Ama Arthur grew up in Nashville, TN; undergraduate was Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. After residency, Ama hopes to specialize in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. E-mail:



[aarthur@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:aarthur@mcvh-vcu.edu).



**Rosa Morales-Theodore, M.D.** Dr. Rosa Morales-Theodore was raised internationally in South America, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Undergrad was Judson College, Elgin, IL and University of Illinois, Rockford Campus for medical school. Plans to subspecialize in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. E-mail: [Rosa.Morales-Theodore@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:Rosa.Morales-Theodore@mcvh-vcu.edu)

**Eloise Weeks, M.D.**— Dr. Eloise Weeks was born and raised in Memphis, TN. Grad of Emory University, Atlanta; received medical degree from University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center. Leaning toward child/adolescent or geriatric psychiatry after residency. E-mail: [eweeks@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:eweeks@mcvh-vcu.edu).



## Molecular Genetics of Depression—Wellcome Grant

### VCU part of international research team awarded Wellcome Trust Foundation grant to study molecular genetics of depression

(RICHMOND, Va., March 2008) – Virginia Commonwealth University is part of an international research team that received a Wellcome Trust Foundation grant totaling more than \$2.8 million to identify the genetic variants that have an impact on the risk for recurrent major depression.

The goal of the five-year project, a collaboration between researchers based at the University of Oxford in England, VCU in the United States, and Fudan University in Shanghai, China, is to identify genetic variants which impact on the risk for recurrent major depression.

Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D., a professor of psychiatry and human genetics in VCU's School of Medicine, is a key collaborator on the study and is working with professors Jonathan Flint, who is the project's principal investigator, and Yiping Chen, both at the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics at Oxford University; and Shen Xun, a professor from Shanghai.

"This is an especially exciting project first because it will be the largest of its kind to try to understand the genetic underpinnings of an especially common and disabling psychiatric disorder, and second, because of the challenge and opportunities to conduct this research with a collaborative international groups," said Kendler.

"Our group at VCU has the responsibility to train and supervise the ratings which will be taking place at up to 15 different sites throughout China," he said.

According to Kendler, because major depression, MD, is caused by many genes and environmental factors and their interactions, progress in discovering specific genetic risk factors has been slow. Low-cost genotyping technologies have recently made possible whole genome analyses of association between genetic variation and disease, but the complex origins of major depression indicate that no single study will be definitive.

"It's important that large, well characterized data sets are made available. We propose to carry out a study of major depression sufficiently powerful to detect

the small genetic effects now known to contribute to susceptibility to the condition. Our primary objective is to establish a large and freely available data set of phenotypes and genotypes," said Kendler.

The team plans to collect data from 6,000 women with recurrent disease and 6,000 women without the condition to be used as controls. Study participants will be made up of women who are of Han Chinese background – so the participants will be genetically and ethnically homogeneous. Kendler said that Shanghai, China, is one of the few places in the world where it will be possible to acquire high-quality phenotypes in a relatively short space of time.

The team will carry out a whole genome association analysis, which assesses variation throughout the human genome through the analysis of between 500,000 and 1 million genetic markers. Their results, genotypes and phenotypes, will be made freely available through a Web accessible database.

In July 2007, VCU hosted a week-long training session for a delegation of psychiatrists from China involved in the research.

During the workshop held at VCU's Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics, attendees were instructed on how to assess depression in study participants using detailed research instruments. This involved learning some new interview skills through role playing. These interview skills differ from those used to assess clinic patients on a daily basis. Also, the nuances of questioning used to assess clinic patients differs from how questioning is done in a scientific research setting. There are also a variety of layers to the research interview process, which is estimated to take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Following the workshop, the delegates returned to China to train other doctors in various health systems on how to assess for depression among study participants and to begin data collection. Kendler, along with Lisa Halberstadt, also with the VCU Department of Human Genetics, visited Shanghai in September 2007 to assist with the training program.

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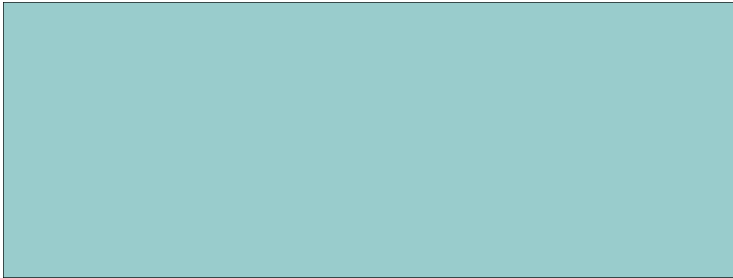
### Merit Grant

Alcohol Dependence (AD) is a major public health problem. Prior research demonstrates that genetic factors play a critical etiologic role in AD. The goal of this project is to identify specific loci (SL) which impact on risk for AD. This application builds on the achievements of the first two funding periods during which we completed collections of a large affected sibling pair and control sample for AD in Ireland. We have completed and analyzed a genome scan for AD, and other AD-related traits and have begun to test physiological and positional candidate genes. We have screened 122 genes using the NIAAA developed "addictions array," completed 439 markers under our chromosome 4 linkage peak and completed a pooled genome wide association (GWA) for AD. We have produced strong evidence for association between AD and ZNF699 a human homolog of the Drosophila gene hangover. This application for a second competitive renewal has six specific aims: i) to continue fine mapping SL under our linkage peak in our affected sibpair sample; ii) to collect, in Ireland, a new sample of 1,000 AD cases and 1,000 controls to increase our power to detect, by association analysis, modest effect SL for AD; iii) to establish a bioinformatics prioritization system to select genes to be tested in our new sample that will utilize eight different sources of data including prior results from our first sample as well as, careful analyses of the linkage studies for alcohol related traits in model organisms and genes whose level changes in mouse brain in response to ethanol; iv) to genotype, using a two-stage design and a false-discovery rate format, 150-200 prioritized genes for AD in sample sizes sufficient to detect 80 percent of true effects with odds ratios greater than or equal to 1.3; v) to study the molecular biology of selected positive SL and AD starting with ZNF699; vi) for all suggestive SL, to examine gene x gene, gene x sex and gene x environment interactions, explore whether these SL impact on patterns of and reactions to ethanol consumption in our control sample, define the boundaries of the phenotypic spectrum of these SL and determine whether the impact of these SL on AD is mediated through other traits.



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### CONGRATULATIONS! Recent Appointments, Honors, Awards and Publications



Dr. Wood

• **Dr. Isaac Wood** — new School of Medicine Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. • **Dr. Bob Friedel**—for spearheading the effort in the United States House of Representatives to declare May as Borderline Personality Disorder Month. • **Dr. John Hettema** was recently asked to serve on the Editorial Board for the journal "Depression and Anxiety". **Dr. Daliborka Danelisen**, selected for Area V's Deputy Representative of Assembly Committee of Area Members-In-Training. This national position is awarded to outstanding residents, giving them the opportunity to represent residents' views within the Assembly. • **Dr. Susan Kornstein** also recently served as co-chair of the conference "Women's Health 2008: The Annual Congress", held in Williamsburg March 28-30,2008. This conference, which is the premier women's health conference in the country, was co-sponsored by the VCU Institute for Women's Health and the Journal of Women's Health, of which Dr. Kornstein is Editor-in-Chief. The theme of the Congress was translating cutting-edge women's health research into practice. Over 600 health care providers were in attendance, representing 30 states. • Howard, M.O., **Balster, R.L.**, Cottler, L.B., Wu, L.-T. and Vaughn, M.G. Inhaled use among incarcerated adolescents In the United States: Prevalence, characteristics, and correlates of use. Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 2008. • **Schneider, Robert K., Levenson, James L.** *Psychiatry Essentials for Primary Care*. ACP Press, 2008. • **Cohen, Robert.** (2008) *Hammond's Choice* (fiction). Richmond, VA: BrandyLane Publishers (Book) • **Dr. Roxann Roberson-Nay's** K01 Mentored Research Scientist Development Award/Grant, which is being funded by the National Institutes of Health and Mental Health. • **Dr. Ramkrishnan Shenoy** was recently awarded the 2008 Frank J. Menolascino Award for Psychiatric Services for Persons with Mental Retardation. • Mental Health Service, McGuire Veterans Medical Center, received the VISN Exceptional Performance Award on 2/27. • **Dr. Antony Fernandez**, V.A. Interim Chief, received the award on behalf of staff in the service for leading the performance measures at the VISN and exceeding benchmarks set for depression screening, tobacco screening and counseling.



Dr. Fernandez

### New Faces in the Department

• **Lisa Smith** joined us in April as Sr. Executive Assistant to the Chairman. Her previous work experience included Executive Administration for a local company which was purchased by a larger corporation. You can reach Lisa at: [lsmith@vcu.edu](mailto:lsmith@vcu.edu) or 828-9156. • **George Kelly** joined us in mid-April as financial manager for sponsored programs at Commonwealth Institute and VTCC. His previous work experience included procurement, payment, budget reconciliation for grants, timekeeping and travel authorizations. He works in Psychiatry two days each week and VTCC three days. You can reach George at: [gpkelly@vcu.edu](mailto:gpkelly@vcu.edu). • **Rupa Murthy** joined us in September as Director of Endowments. Her previous work experience included political campaign organization and fundraising. You can reach Rupa at [rsmurthy@vcu.edu](mailto:rsmurthy@vcu.edu) or 628-3878. • **Elizabeth Cunningham** joined us in November as Executive Administrative Assistant to the Chairman. She also serves as secretarial support to Rupa Murthy and Dr. Susan Kornstein. Her previous work experience included Church administration and finance and political campaign management. You can reach Elizabeth at: [ecunningham@vcu.edu](mailto:ecunningham@vcu.edu) or 628-0195.