

VCU Psychiatry

Mind Matters

Fall 2008

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Our Department

Joel J. Silverman, M.D., Chair

Our mission is to improve the mental health of Virginians through our proven ability to do excellent and innovative research, education, advocacy and clinical programs. Our job is very rewarding because it is so important to the health and welfare of our communities and because we have already made important advances developing useful new science.

Our job is very rewarding because it is so important to the health and welfare of our communities . . .

The discovery of the only replicated genetic locus for schizophrenia by our Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics is an example of one of our contributions. We also scientifically demonstrated the important interaction between genes and environment and we have developed well-recognized leadership in Women's Mental Health, Autism, Psychosomatic Medicine and Child Psychiatry.

As vital as these findings and programs are, we must do much more than improve Psychiatric Diagnoses and Treatment. The public is increasingly aware of the importance of

accurate Psychiatric diagnosis and treatment along with the need to eliminate discrimination against people with mental problems. We must develop cures for these debilitating disorders. While you may think this is a wildly optimistic and audacious goal, the history of science and the progress already accomplished strongly support my expectations.

VCU Psychiatry has the will to attack these tough issues and with the help of good friends who share our vision, we will hire and retain the best minds in psychiatric research. We will attract and teach the best students and together we will make the necessary progress to cure many mental illnesses.

Our first issue of *Mind Matters*

Welcome to the first issue of Mind Matters. Mind Matters will be published three times a year to give our supporters an opportunity to follow the Department of Psychiatry as we highlight pertinent mental health issues in our community.

Thanks for your support!

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

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Medical Center
In the tradition of the Medical College of Virginia

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MCV Campus | School of Medicine | Department of Psychiatry
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A Resident's Life

At 8:45 AM: called to the ER to evaluate a 60 year old man, described as a preacher who has come in with psychiatric symptoms described as manic with pressured speech, hyper about his religion, restless and is difficult to redirect. His wife acknowledges this behavior is extremely strange for her husband of 35 years.

I immediately decide that onset of mania in a sixty year-old is very unlikely. I ask about his vital signs,

basic labs including a drug screen. It sounds “organic”, so I’m leaning towards delirium or a substance induced illness...

The ER staff explains that no labs or vitals have been taken yet, but insists he is acting strange and deems that the illness is clearly psychiatric.

I order the vitals and lab tests and then go talk with the patient and his wife.

During my evaluation, the patient becomes even more agitated and intimidating to our ER staff. I realize we can’t continue to evaluate him directly.

I begin a conversation with his wife, who reveals that her husband does not drink nor uses illicit drugs. He does have a past medical history of lower back pain and high blood pressure. He has never been diagnosed with a psychiatric issue.

Going back to Med School 101, I ask what medications he takes at home.

Suddenly, it becomes clear – his wife says he’s been off of his blood pressure medication for the last week

since they changed insurance. She actually tried taking his blood pressure a couple days ago, but assumed their in-home machine was broken because it wouldn’t register any value.

I immediately asked that the gentleman be sedated so we could get a read on his vital signs. They revealed his blood pressure was 220/130 – he received meds to control his BP and we had a final diagnosis ... Hypertensive posterior leukoencephalopathy – a reversible brain abnormality caused by high blood pressure. It was on this Wednesday morning in my residency that I realized that a thorough evaluation, combined with basic medical training and an understanding of psychiatric illness can mean the difference between life and death.

We train about 38 general psychiatry residents at any given time, and also offer subspecialty training in child/adolescent psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, and psychosomatic medicine. Physicians receive very broad training, because of our large patient base, with over 12,000 patient visits each year.

Congratulations

to all of the interns, residents and fellows in the Department of Psychiatry who graduated this year! A special thanks to their friends and families who joined us for our annual graduation dinner June 11th at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens

Awards and Honors

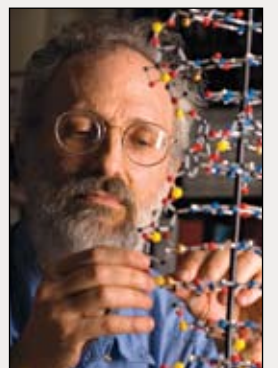
Five of our doctors were named to Richmond Magazine’s Top Docs. **James Levenson, M.D.**, **Joel Silverman M.D.**, and **Bob Schneider, M.D.**, were honored by their peers with the title for Adult Psychiatry, while **Bela Sood, M.D.**, and **Neil Sonenklar, M.D.**, were honored in Child Psychiatry.

We’d also like to congratulate our good friend, **James Asa Shield, Jr., M.D.**, who also received a Top Doc Honor for his work in Adult Psychiatry.

Ram Shenoy, M.D., a clinical member, received the 2008 Frank Menolascino Award for Psychiatric Services for Persons with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities from the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Dr. Shenoy has taught upcoming residents and medical students as an Adjunct Faculty in our Department for many years.

Kenneth Kendler, M.D., has recently been chosen to judge applicants for the Sir John Templeton Prize. At \$1.6 million, it is one of

the largest prizes in the scientific research field. Kendler is the Director of the Virginia Institute of Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics. His work in genetics research spans many psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia, anorexia, and depression.



Dr. Kendler

A Child's Mind

The Virginia Treatment Center for Children (VTCC) has been providing mental health services to the children, adolescents, and families of Virginia for over 46 years.

VTCC, which houses the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, is staffed by treatment teams that include Child Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologists, Social Workers, Music, Art, Occupational and Recreation Therapists, Nurses, a Nutritional Specialist, Teachers, and Behavioral Counselors. VTCC's facility includes an 18 bed acute care unit, a 10 bed residential treatment program, a 12 desk day treatment program, an outpatient clinic, an 11 classroom school building, an occupational therapy room, family visitation lounges, cafeteria, an outdoor pool, an accessible playground, gymnasium, greenhouse, and group, art and music therapy areas.

Serious emotional problems affect one in every ten young people, but an estimated two-thirds are not getting the help they need. We are proud to serve over 1,600 children who walk through VTCC's doors each year seeking treatment. Some are court-ordered, while others come voluntarily with their parents seeking help for their mental health difficulties. In addition to providing treatment for children and families, the VTCC faculty also train the child psychiatrists, child psychologists, and social workers of the future so that the youngest citizens of Virginia will receive the best care. The faculty at VTCC also conducts important research to help further our understanding of child and adolescent mental health. Whether they are studying autism or a teenagers depression, VTCC's clinical researchers are at the forefront of their field.

In the last few years, the VTCC has reached out to the community and asked for help caring for Virginia's youngest mental health patients. The Richmond Women's Business Consortium and the Richmond chapter of the National As-



Dr. Bela Sood works with our youngest patients to help them understand how the brain is affected by mental illness.

When my son needed help for depression, we discovered that one of the best child mental health programs in the country was right here in Richmond – Virginia Treatment Center for Children. Thanks to the incredible staff at VTCC, today, my son is 24-years of age, happy and healthy! I can't tell you how grateful we are that such an incredible program was there when we needed it. – Anonymous

sociation of Women in Construction provided over \$65,000 in donations and labor and built a new accessible playground for VTCC's children.

The VTCC Advisory Council will hold their second Annual Dinner on October 18th at the Virginia Aviation Museum. Last year over 100 people attended the dinner honoring Markel Corporation's CEO, Alan Kirschner, for his support of Autism research at VTCC. This year, the Advisory Council will be adding auction items and live music to help raise funds for program development. Governor Timothy Kaine will receive their leadership award, while Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Marilyn Tavenner, will chair the event.

Recently, dozens of volunteers through the Jewish Community Center's Knitting Circle began donating community blankets to the graduates of VTCC's residential treatment program to take home. It is evident by the outpouring of support that the community cares for these children, their future, and the future of children's mental health.

The VTCC has built many community partnerships around our region. Over the last few months, the Woodville Project was launched to tackle mental health issues in Richmond City

Continued on page 4

2nd Annual Child Mental Health Awards Gala Honoring Governor Tim Kaine

Please Join Honorary Chair, Marilyn Tavenner,
The Secretary of Health and Human Resources
On Saturday, October 18, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.
at the Virginia Aviation Museum

Call Delores at (804) 828-1123 for tickets now!

Awards and Honors

Asha Mishra, M.D., Medical Director of Chesterfield County's Community Service Board and a member of our faculty, has been elected to Chair the Committee on Women for the APA.



Dr. Kornstein

Dr. Susan Kornstein is being honored by Jewish Women International as a 2008 "Woman to Watch" for her work as a pioneer in women's health. She is

one of 10 women nationwide to receive this award, which will be presented to her in Washington, DC in December. Susan directs the VCU Mood Disorders Institute at VCUHS.

Last winter, **Dr. James Levenson** & Dr. Robert Schneider published Psychiatry Essentials for Primary Care. This groundbreaking book has helped physicians around the world recognize and manage psychiatric disorders in their patients. They present an overview of the disorders that primary care doctors encounter daily.

Governor Timothy Kaine has appointed two of our faculty members to serve the Commonwealth. **Bela Sood, M.D.**, has been appointed to the Board of Social Services and **Ananda Pandurangi, M.D.**, was tapped to serve on the Board of Mental Health.

We are pleased that our Doctors will advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the citizens of Virginia on the mental welfare of our State.



Dr. Pandurangi



Volunteers with the Weinstein Jewish Community Center knit together blankets for patients of the VTCC.

A Child's Mind continued from page 3

Public Schools. The Virginia Treatment Center for Children's psychiatric and psychological services will initiate a pilot program at Woodville Elementary School in Church Hill. The program, which initiates interaction between students, teachers, and parents, has the potential to be replicated in other school systems. The project will involve collaboration with area agencies to provide integrated psychiatric consultation and services to children and families. The emphasis will be on child-focused, family-driven services such as enhancing self care capabilities and drawing lines between parent collaboration and the mental health of the children in the schools. The Woodville project will educate parents and families about

mental health – specifically dealing with the importance of recognizing and dealing with problems in children and promoting positive mental health. The VTCC staff will also work directly with teachers and school administrators to provide tools they can use to respond to their students mental health needs. The project also trains individuals preparing to be mental health professionals using a community based approach as they serve Richmond's teachers, students and their families.

To learn more about the VTCC, please visit their website at www.vcuhealth.org/vtcc. The VTCC combines research, education, advocacy and clinical programs to combat these disorders in young patients around Virginia.

Research Highlights

Our Research Shows that Genetic Factors May Influence Common Fears. The genes that influence our common fears of rats, the dark, or flying change considerably over time rather than staying static, according to a new study by Kenneth Kendler, M.D., Director of the Virginia Institute for Behavioral and Psychiatric Genetics.

"The genome is a dynamic place," said Dr. Kendler. "Evolution has likely shaped our genomes to adapt to changing developmental situations. For example, what an 8-year-old child should be afraid of is not the same as that of a 20-year-old young adult. Our genome reflects that difference."

Our researchers have also identified a gene associated with schizophrenia that could provide insight about functional changes that occur on the molecular level in people ailing from the disease. The results of the research, led by Xiangning Chen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Human Genetics in VCU's School of Medicine, and Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D., are reported in the March 1 issue of the journal *Biological Psychiatry*.

Good News!

The Department of Psychiatry will begin offering FREE CME and CEU credits starting in September. Please visit our website at www.vcu.edu/psych for the new grand rounds schedule and sign up in advance to receive CMEs in the fall!

Support Our Department

Every family is affected by mental illness. We hope you'll join us as we work to make their journeys a little easier.

The VCU Department of Psychiatry is making remarkable strides towards important discoveries daily. We translate those discoveries into compassionate care.

We educate young doctors, treat thousands of patients, and conduct research at the frontiers of mental health. From Alzheimer's to anxiety, autism to depression, and ADHD to substance abuse, our Department has broad expertise that reaches across the spectrum of mental health and wellness. With over 80 faculty working throughout the region to serve those who are struggling with their mental health issues, our Department is excited to be on the forefront of mental health. Thank you for helping us continue this standard of excellence and grow our Department.

If you would like to know more about opportunities to support the Department of Psychiatry at VCUHS, please email Rupa S. Murthy at rsmurthy@vcu.edu or call 804.628.3878.

Please Support Us As We Launch Our Annual Fund Drive This Fall !
Check out our website at www.vcu.edu/psych.

Mind Matters Fall 2008

Mind Matters is published three times a year by the Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Psychiatry on the Medical College of Virginia Campus. Reader comments and suggestions are welcome, please call 804.628.3878 or email rsmurthy@vcu.edu or write to P.O. Box 980710, Dept. of Psychiatry, Richmond, VA 23298-0710.

Mind Matters provides an opportunity for friends and alumni to stay in touch with the Department of Psychiatry while we work to prevent and reduce the impact of mental illness on society. Donors support the Department's endeavors in ways that traditional funding sources do not.

Please email rsmurthy@vcu.edu to subscribe to our quarterly E-Newsletter.

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