Faculty Focus on Margaret Rittenhouse, LCSW

I was born in Accra, Ghana, Africa. My parents were in the Foreign Service and we were stationed there. I am one of seven children, all of whom were born outside of the U.S. After living in Ghana for two years we moved to England, where we lived for one year. After that time we lived in Toronto, Canada for seven years and when my father retired we moved to South Florida where I attended middle school and high school. I attended Catholic University of America in Washington D.C., where I earned a B.A. in Business Management with a specialization in Managerial Relations. I worked in outside sales selling steel for Bethlehem Steel and then selling 3M overhead projectors in Indiana. My mother and grandmother were both accomplished artists.

I joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) which is like the Peace Corps, where I lived in community with other young people who worked at non-profit agencies in Cleveland, Ohio. The focus was on four principles: social justice, simple living, community and spirituality. I worked with the elderly at a drop-in center and Meals On Wheels program. From there I attended Loyola University where I earned my Master in Social Work (M.S.W.) degree. Life brought me to Kansas City where I worked in a large health system as an Employee Assistance Professional (EAP) and Licensed Clinical Social Worker. We moved to the Richmond area to be closer to my family. I have two girls. One is a first year Vet Student at Virginia Tech and the other is a sophomore at Virginia Tech with the dream of possibly becoming a doctor. She (Christina Rittenhouse) will work for her second summer as an intern at the GME office at VCU Health System.

After working in EAP (at REACH EAP here in Richmond) and Human Resources (at Chesterfield County Government) I was blessed to be hired here at VCU Health System in 2010. As the Clinical Director for HelpLink Employee Assistance Program (the internal EAP for VCU Health System) I am honored to be able to serve the employees and those living in their households by providing counseling to help them manage their stressors and meet their goals. In addition, we/I provide services to managers and teams of VCUHS when dealing with such events as Critical Incidents, employee losses and compassion fatigue.

I find the team members of VCU Health System and VCU to be particularly resilient and resourceful, and enjoy the many amazing people with whom I have had the privilege to work. I particularly appreciate being able to combine my knowledge of business/organizational development with social work. My hope is that I can utilize my motivational skills, my communication skills and my skills in understanding human nature, to help VCUHS meet the goal of being America’s safest health system by providing exceptional service in a timely manner. Our greatest challenges in providing EAP services to VCU Health System are the complexity and stressors of working in this Level I Trauma Center. The patients served by our team members present with many complex issues including economic, health and psychological challenges. This dynamic, in turn, affects our 10,000+ team members.

My passions are Employee Assistance (EAP), social justice, traveling and art appreciation. They were sparked by my mother and grandmother. Fueled by my experiences in the JVC and mission trips to Appalachia and Haiti, as well as my volunteering with two refugee families from Burundi, Africa, and other faith-based experiences, these passions have brought me to VCUHS with an unique worldview. I continue to look forward to working with VCUHS team members, members of HelpLink EAP staff, the VCU Department of Psychiatry and the Greater Richmond Community at large. (Margaret is Clinical Director of HelpLink Employee Assistance Program (EAP).)
Dear Friends:

This Chair Letter marks the end of another successful instructional year. We held our annual Graduation Banquet at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens and celebrated the graduation of eight PGY 4 Residents, three Fellows, three Post-doctoral Fellows and three Social Work Interns. We also had four Pre-doctoral Interns and two Practicum Students graduate. All are listed in a related column. We are confident these graduates will make a difference in their next career steps at VCU and throughout the United States.

In May, I attended the 168th Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Toronto, Canada. It was great to see many former VCU students as well as to collaborate with colleagues from around the world. I also serve on the Board of Regents of the American College of Psychiatrists; I strongly encourage our residents and faculty to participate in a national psychiatric organization.

I am excited about the progress we are making toward our new VTCC! This has been a long and rewarding process. We are hoping to be in our new home by 2017. This will be a state-of-the-art facility in which we will all be proud!

Thank you all for your many contributions which are helping us reach our Department’s Mission: To improve the mental health of our citizens through education, research, advocacy and innovative care. Each of you matter. Have a great summer!

PGY 4 Residents: Philippe Carrie, M.D., Joshua Chandy, D.O., Shivan Desai, M.D., Zeeshan Faruqui, M.B.B.S., Sameer Hassamal, M.D., Sherin Moideen, M.D., Kimberly Reese, M.D. and Jennifer Smith, M.D.

PGY 3 Residents transferring to Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowships: Sulman Mirza, M.D. will be at the University of Maryland at Baltimore and Shameem Momin, M.D. will be at the Medical College of Georgia Child Psychiatry program. We wish them great success.

Drs. Michael Fox, Philip Lee, Sameer Hassamal, Rajinder Singh, Troy Hoff, David Lekberg.

Resident Graduation

Drs. Christopher Kogut, Divy Gongireddy, Mark Bahoura, Benjamin Lowe, Zeeshan Faruqui, Philippe Carrie, Dana Soper, Daina Ngugi.


You can access the Chair Letter online at: http://psych.vcu.edu
Hi, my name is Nancy Doyle. I am the interim Nursing Director for Psychiatry. I have had the privilege of doing this role several times in my career, but no other time was more exciting than it is right now. For the majority of my thirty-nine years at VCU, I have been the Nurse Manager of the Virginia Treatment Center for Children. When I graduated from VCU School of Nursing, a fellow classmate asked me to go with her for moral support to apply as a RN at VTCC. I went and got the job. It has definitely been a great fit for me and helped me to discover my passion for the mentally ill. I had only been at VTCC a little over a year when the manager became ill and they asked me to take on that role. When you are young, you believe that you can do anything. I definitely learned by doing and was willing to work long hours. I also got my Masters degree at the same time. This was definitely before husband and children. Recently, at a meeting with the School of Nursing, I was described as the mother of many with all of the children that I have been involved with during my career. In truth, I have two adult children. My daughter, Christy, is a research assistant at Dominion Power. My son, Robert, is at VCU majoring in programming. My husband, Gregg, owns his own design firm. That, plus two very active dogs, keeps us busy with work and family. I am passionate about my faith, my family and my work. Hopefully in that order. I love singing at church where my husband plays guitar in the worship band. I love to travel and definitely do not do enough of it. I want every trip to end up at a beach building. I would love to see this happen for our adult population as well.

News from McGuire Veteran’s Administration Medical Center

Recently, there was a successful CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) accreditation for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) overseen by Stacey Conroy, LCSW and Mary Bradshaw, Ph.D, PRRC Coordinator. This represents the 4th CARF accredited program in the Mental Health Service programs.

We also recently completed the successful hire of Dr. James Bjork, a research neuroscientist, on a 3/8ths VA appointment. Dr. Bjork simultaneously maintains an Associate Professorship in the Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies, Department of Psychiatry, VCU. His arrival is anticipated to create additional inter-institutional synergy (VA-VCU) and expand scientific possibilities.

The first incumbent in our recent successful expansion of the psychology training program with recurring funding (and selection) of an additional intern who will focus on serious mental illness across the lifespan, with rotations in the PRRC, Inpatient Psychiatry and Geriatrics will begin September 2015.

There have been six recent publications on a wide range of topics, including Mild traumatic brain injury is associated with health problems beyond the impact of PTSD, depression, and anxiety disorders which was presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies in Philadelphia, PA; Negative urgency and personality traits: The role of neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness in a veteran sample presented to the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Conference: Forensic Issues Special Interest Group; Risk and resilience factors are differentially associated with psychosocial outcomes one month after discharge from inpatient rehabilitation and a poster was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) in San Diego, CA; Development and evaluation of a behavioral pain management treatment program in a Veterans Affairs Medical Center published in Military Medicine; Examination of basal neuroendocrine levels among OIF/OEF/OND veterans which was presented as a Poster at Virginia Commonwealth University’s 18th Annual Graduate Research and Exhibit Symposium, Richmond, VA; Olfactory deficits in Veterans serving post-9/11 reporting TBI: A potential biomarker of injury presented at the International Neuropsychological Society 43rd Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

Recent and upcoming workshops and symposia include: Pickett, T., Murphy, C, & Geiss, M (scheduled October 27, 2015). Military Culture and Deployment-Related Mental Health Affecting Veterans and their Families. Accepted submission for a 4-hour Pre-Conference Instructional Course at the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) 92nd Annual Conference. Hilton Anatole, Dallas, TX and Pickett, T. & Murphy, C. (2015, April). Military culture shooting a new azimuth: Charting a course in the civilian world. Virginia Psychological Association Annual Conference, Richmond, VA. APA CE approved course (2 hours).

New Director of VCU Center for Clinical and Translational Research

Dr. F. Gerard Moeller was recently appointed Director of the VCU Center for Clinical and Translational Research. He assumes leadership from the Dr. John H. Clore, who was the founding Director of the CCTR. Additionally, Dr. Moeller has now become the principal investigator on VCU’s prestigious NIH Clinical and Translational Science Grant and holds the title of Associate Vice President for Clinical Research.

Dr. Moeller is Twin-Board Certified in Psychiatry and Neurology as well as Addiction Medicine.

Dr. Moeller serves our department as Professor of Psychiatry, Pharmacology and Toxicology and Neurology. He is also our Director of Addiction Medicine, Division Chair of Addiction Psychiatry and he created an Outpatient Substance Abuse clinic last year. Dr. Moeller came to us three years ago from the University of Texas Houston Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences and the University of Texas Medical Branch Institute for Translational Sciences.
Tess Searls, N.P., was named Staff Member of the Month for June for the entire VCU Health System. Her expertise as a Psychiatric NP at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children and dedication helped her earn the award.

We are pleased with the turn-out for the unveiling of Dr. Norman (Mike) Camp’s Vietnam book entitled “Army Psychiatry in the Vietnam War: New Challenges in Extended Counterinsurgency Warfare”. Over 100 people were present. This book will fill in one of the missing pieces of the puzzle which the Vietnam War represents to many.

Congratulations to Gregory King, L.C.S.W. and Lisa Davis, RN-BC, BSN, M.Ed. for their winning grant proposal entitled “Patient & Family Advisory Council for Adult Inpatient Psychiatry” which will be funded for $6,000. The grant was part of the AHA McKesson Quest 4 Quality Patient Family Engagement Grant from VCU Medical Center.

Congratulations to Dr. Roxann Roberson-Nay for the successful grant application to the NIMH. The total grant on which she is the PI is for $275,000 for two years. Dr. Ananda Amstadter is a co-investigator and the research project is about gene expression analysis of blood samples collected to study genetic biomarkers associated with early-onset major depression.

Congratulations to Dr. Srinivasa Punyala who was elected one of the award recipients of the 2015 Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award. Along with the award was a public ceremony congratulating the six winners as well as a gift of $250.

Congratulations to Richmond Magazine’s Top Docs! This year our faculty and clinical faculty were stars. In Addictions Dr. Gerry Moeller was chosen. Child Psychiatry had two winners with Drs. Alexis Aplasca and Bela Sood. Adult Psychiatry winners were Drs. Christopher Kogut, James Levenson, Joel Silverman and Eli Zaller. Additionally, Dr. Martin Buxton was a winner in all three categories!

Congratulations to Drs. Cheryl Al-Mateen, Jessica Malloy and Sandra Mullen (pharmacist at VTCC) who wrote chapters for the new Handbook of Mental Health in African-American Youth. Former faculty Drs. Donald Oswald, Sala Webb and Erlanger Turner also contributed.

Welcome to Dr. Lillian Tidler, to our department. Dr. Tidler is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry in the Addictions Division. Her office is on West 11 South and she will be working with Addictions and Substance Abuse patients.

The VCU 10th Summer Institute in Psychiatry for Medical Students will be held July 12-17, 2015 this year. This special summer offering for medical students is hosted by the VCU School of Medicine. The purpose of the Institute is to provide medical students with an exciting and intensive experience in Psychiatry, covering topics not traditionally in the curriculum, along with clinical experiences provided by nationally and internationally known experts in our field. They will tour Inpatient and Outpatient clinics, VTCC and VIPBG. They will receive demonstrations in TMS and Vagal Nerve Stimulation and will work with the Center for Human-Animal Interaction and Animal-Assisted Therapy. They will learn about motivational interviewing and attend lectures in many topics, including PTSD, MTBI, Suicide Assessment, Psychological Assessment for Gastric Bypass Surgery and Geriatric Psychiatry. Social opportunities are provided each evening for dinner. This program is available to students enter M-II - M-IV years. Dr. Joel Moran is the new Director of the Summer Institute in Psychiatry.

This year’s residency program will begin July 1 and the following doctors will be joining our residency program:

Caitlin Carnell, M.D. of the University of Maryland SOM, Andrea Cruz, M.D. from Colegio Nayor de Neustra Senora del Rosario SOM, Michael DiBiase, M.D. of St. George’s University SOM, Patrick Kane, M.D. of St. George’s University SOM, Simrun Kaur, M.D. of St. George’s University SOM, Han Lee, M.D. from the American University of the Caribbean SOM, Avenet Madan, M.D. of St. George’s University SOM, Elliot Pohlmann, M.D. of Virginia Tech Carilion SOM, Zachary Ruppenkamp, D.O. of the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Andrew Snyder, M.D. of the Virginia Tech Carilion SOM and Mindy Tyree, D.O. of the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine.

It is also worthwhile noting that our VCU Psychiatry Residency filled at a significantly higher level than last year.

The Health Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship program is pleased to welcome our next Postdoctoral Fellow in Psychology this summer in August. Haley Kutner, Ph.D. received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Yeshiva University in New York City. She completed her internship in clinical psychology at Eastern Virginia Medical School, with clinical concentrations in integrated primary care, eating disorders and family systems therapy. Dr. Kutner’s research interests include investigating the relationship between family factors and morbidity outcomes in chronic illness.

During her Fellowship, she will work with cardiothoracic surgery, abdominal organ transplant, bariatric surgery and the gastroenterology/Hepatology program for patients with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis. Dr. Kutner will be supervised by faculty Health Psychologists, Drs. Mary Ellen Olbrisch, Stephan Weinland and Karen Stewart.

Dr. Kutner follows Dr. Ebony Vinson, who finishes her Fellowship in August. During her time with us, Dr. Vinson has made significant contributions to the primary care psychology, weight loss surgery and organ transplant services. Ebony has been a visible member of the transplant team and will be missed when her Fellowship concludes.
The June 2nd gathering of interested citizens at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Lecture Series produced many positive results for mental health awareness in the Commonwealth. There were 116 people present and Dr. Silverman received many positive comments from the audience after a lively question and answer period following the slide presentation. One attendee stated “I have always wanted to know more about depression because I have a family member diagnosed with it. This was an excellent, educational use of my time and I look forward to Dr. Silverman presenting again next year”. The lecture series is free and open to the public. For a list of upcoming lectures, contact: http://www.lewisginter.org/learn/adult-classes/symposia-seminars/