Dear Colleagues and Friends of the department:

I am extremely proud to announce our own Dr. Michael Neale has been selected to receive the VCU Distinguished Scholarship Award this year. The award will be presented to Mike at the Faculty Convocation on August 23. Please put this on your calendar to attend if possible.

It gives me genuine pleasure to announce the promotion and tenure of five faculty. Drs. Susan Waller, Chair of Outpatient Psychiatry, William (Tim) Nay, Outpatient Psychologist, and Jasmin Vassileva, Addictionology researcher, were promoted to Associate Professor. Dr. Nathan Gillespie, VIPBG researcher, was promoted to Associate Professor and was awarded tenure. Dr. James Bjork, Addictionology researcher, was awarded tenure.

Graduation was especially nice this year with our Dean Buckley as the speaker. Our PGY-4 graduates are pictured below. Below left to right: Drs. Dana Soper will join our VCU Psychosomatic Medicine fellowship, Kara Beatty will begin a position at the Center for Neurorehabilitative Services in Midlothian, Drew Matz will begin a Psychosomatic Medicine fellowship at George Washington University/INOVA Fairfax Hospital, Srinivasa Punyala will begin as a psychiatrist in private practice in Hopewell and Petersburg, Hassan Shah will join inpatient psychiatry at Hunter Holmes McGuire V.A.M.C. in Richmond, Rajinder Singh will begin a position as a general psychiatrist in Colorado and Bahdhan Chakraborty will begin as a staff psychiatrist at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC also.

Our 2017-2018 PGY-1 Interns will arrive soon and we want to welcome them. Jonathan Anthony, D.O, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Crystal Babb, M.D., Howard University College of Medicine, Kimberly Bowman, M.D., VCU School of Medicine, Shane Carrillo, M.D., University of Kansas School of Medicine, Shaquana Clark, M.D., Meharry Medical College, Deborah Kiehlmeier, D.O., Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Lauren Nutille, M.D., VCU School of Medicine, Jonathan Punzi, M.D., Eastern Virginia Medical School, Danielle Robinson, M.D., Howard University College of Medicine, Kelsey Stevens, M.D., American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine and Alyssa Warren, M.D., Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Chief Residents next year will be My Chuong, M.D., Reeyaz Esack, M.D. and Michael Fox, D.O. Junior Chief Residents will be Caitlin Carnell, M.D., Patrick Kane, M.D. and Avneet Madan, M.D.

We also welcome new Affiliate Faculty Dr. Russell Barkley, Clinical Professor, Drs. Tim Bigdeli, Anna Docherty and Minyoung Lee, Assistant Clinical Professors.
Welcome Our Two New Psychologists

Dr. Leila Islam, Psychology Division

I often joke that the first several decades of my life consisted of a slow progression northwest of about a hundred miles. I was born and raised in Portsmouth, VA, went to college at VCU and the College of William & Mary, obtained a Master’s degree in Physiology at VCU’s SOM, worked in the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism at VCU and after deciding that I wanted to be a clinical psychologist, of course, entered the Clinical Psychology graduate program at VCU. I then jetted off to Connecticut to complete my internship and postdoctoral fellowship at the Veterans Affairs Connecticut Healthcare System and Yale University, before accepting a faculty position with the Department of Family & Community Medicine at the University of Maryland’s SOM in Baltimore, Maryland. For many reasons, it seems fitting that I am returning to VCU and could not be more excited about joining the Department of Psychiatry. Though a far cry from my early aspirations to be a mailman or an acrobat, the opportunity to work as a health psychologist where I first learned about the field feels just as dream-worthy.

Personally, my husband, Jacob, and I are excited to be back in the city where we met, now with a 1.5 year old in tow, and probably most excited are my son’s grandparents, who all live less than two hours away. I look forward to being reminded of what a beautiful state Virginia is, eating my way through the Richmond food scene, and reconnecting with others at VCU to reflect on how we’ve all grown. I cannot wait to integrate back into serving the RVA community and being part of the important work taking place at VCU. I will join the faculty on July 1, 2017. Dr. Islam’s full story will be featured in the Fall Newsletter.

Dr. Rashelle Hayes, Psychology Division

The opportunity to move back to Richmond and to Virginia Commonwealth University as Faculty is a privilege and honor. Yes, I am originally from South Chesterfield so you can probably imagine my family’s excitement. I shared my family’s excitement, not only because I would be closer to them, but because I knew I’d join fellow colleagues and future friends who share my commitment and passion for clinical health psychology. Its role in treating the whole person and reducing morbidity and mortality rates is paramount in a number of health areas and is a service we shouldn’t ignore as providers and educators. I will join the faculty on July 10, 2017.

On a personal note, I’d like to think of myself as a person who tries to practice promoting positive mental health, so, you’ll find me signing up for a 5K here or there. If you need me to be on a team, ask me! I’m also an extreme hobbyist when it comes to photography; I have and take tons of pictures of the world. Most of the time you’ll find me hanging around my husband, Chris, who also trained at VCUHS and is now a pediatric gastroenterologist at St. Mary’s Hospital. Finally, and most importantly, I am a mom of two young boys, Aaron and Tristan, and consequently know everything about X-men and video games. We’re going on a “Pilgrimage” this summer to visit various churches, temples, and mosques throughout the Richmond area.

In addition to spending time with my family, I enjoy working out at the gym, attending a local lodge and hanging out with good friends. For a while I was gardening but became bored and started a new hobby of making rings from old silver coins or copper piping. I’m getting bored again and my wife looks nervous when I tell her I want to raise chickens and bees.

I was born among the cornfields of Indiana. My extended family and my wife’s family still live there and we visit as often as we can. I have a wonderful wife and a teenage son, Alex. Susan is a PRN speech therapist and works at various local hospitals and rehab centers. Our patient population is similar enough for us to have some common stories, but different enough to keep the work conversation interesting! We’ve been together for almost 25 years, so she really has played a big part in who I am today. Alex and I are close, and we spend a lot of time discussing everything from religion and politics to X-Men and video games. We’re going on a “Pilgrimage” this summer to visit various churches, temples, and mosques throughout the Richmond area.

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I have always enjoyed the concepts of mental health, collaboration, justice and simply helping others out. I attended Indiana University where I discovered my interest in clinical social work. It seemed like a natural fit. After getting my Master’s in Social Work my wife and I moved to Richmond to try something new. While working at the Daily Planet, a gentleman named Dr. Sultan Lakhani (you may know) encouraged me to apply for a social work opening. I’ve enjoyed working here since October of 2000. I soon received my LCSW, and in 2006 I was promoted to Lead Clinical Social Worker. I’ve climbed the social work clinical ladder to level IV and also have been appointed Assistant Clinical Professor. I now enjoy supervising a wonderful group of psychiatric social workers. I may be biased, but I couldn’t ask for a better, more caring and hardworking team.

Since I have one foot in the clinical side and one foot in the administrative side I see the challenges of both worlds and try to generate solutions whenever I can. Each day I create the coverage schedule for the social workers and provide therapy and clinical case management to my patients. I hold individual and family sessions. I also coordinate care with the outpatient community. In addition to their mental health care, many of our patients need assistance with substance use treatment, housing, legal issues and financial matters. I enjoy the administrative aspect of my work, such as meeting with outside agencies to improve patient care, assisting with our internal departmental committees, collaborating with our Care Coordination Department for difficult patient situations and selecting Psychiatry Grand Round speakers. I’ve helped NAMI become a regular part of our patient care and hope to utilize MCV Auxiliary grant funds next year to start a patient library. I’m grateful to be here, surrounded by so many caring staff members in a quality environment. None of us could do our jobs alone and thankfully we don’t have to.
My grandfather loved his job as a small-town attorney, and worked until he was 95. He also played with his grandkids, went dancing with his wife several times a week, and had a decades-long tradition of a standing card game with friends. He took care of himself with a daily exercise routine, naps and plenty of fishing. He told my sister, brother and me, “Just do what you love,” and I have taken his advice.

In fourth grade my Girl Scout troop was given a tour of a pediatrics ward by a child life specialist. I came home and announced to my mother, “That's what I want to be when I grow up.”

"Ok," she said, “but you'll have to go to school for a long time.”

"Nevermind!” I replied, but I put in the additional 18 years of education to become a clinical child psychologist, because I knew I wanted to work with kids and families in crisis.

It was worth it. Working with children and adolescents, many who suffer from chronic mental illness and trauma, is challenging and inspiring. After being at VTCC for 17 years, it has been a delight to see kids grow up, move past adversity and become thriving adults, some who come back for “tune ups” from time to time. Being a faculty member and Training Director feeds my curiosity and pushes me to learn and grow. The role of providing teaching and mentoring is uniquely rewarding. Working with the administrative teams in the department and VTCC is a great opportunity to think strategically and to grapple with the “big picture.” Wearing various hats throughout the day keeps me on my toes, and even when I go home exhausted, I am proud of the work my team and I did that day.

Like my grandfather, I value a balanced life. I go on adventures whenever I can—foreign travel, whitewater kayaking or venturing into a new pursuit. I keep grounded with exercise, gardening, hiking with my dog, and cooking with friends. I’m working on writing fiction, and have a piece of creative writing coming out in an anthology next month.

At the end of graduate training at VCU, I had to choose between working here or go to the private practice a graduate school professor was inviting me to join. I’m glad I landed here, as it has allowed me to redefine my career at various points while continuing to work with the population and colleagues I enjoy. I’ve received great mentoring from Dr. Bob Cohen and others and this has greatly impacted my career trajectory.

My dream is that every patient I have contact with, every student I teach, might take something away that will make their life a little richer, or their work a little more influential and they, in turn, will pass it on. We don't know where the ripples go but I feel that in working as part of the team at VTCC, there is opportunity for a powerful effect and this gives my individual efforts meaning and hope. I’m grateful to my grandfather and others who have put me on the path of my work as a psychologist, teacher, and mentor and I look forward to the rest of the journey!
Congratulations

- Congratulations to Dr. Joe Bledowski, Assistant Professor, for being chosen to receive the Joel J. Silverman Excellence in Teaching Award which was presented at the annual Department Graduation.

- Congratulations to Dr. Cheryl Al-Mateen who was elected to the Nominating Committee of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

- Congratulations to Dr. John (Jack) Hettema, VIPBG, on receiving word that his R01 grant project “Genome-wide association studies of anxiety spectrum phenotypes” will be funded by NIMH starting this summer with a four year $1.5 Million research study aiming to continue his long-standing efforts to identify the genes that increase risk for human anxiety disorders. Dr. Hettema co-chairs a newly-formed group which will coordinate the analyses. Co-investigators are Drs. Brad Verhulst, Silviu Bacanu and Nathan Gillespie of VIPBG.

- Congratulations to Dr. Bushra Shah who recently served on a panel at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens on women’s mental health issues. A letter was received commending her “outstanding job as a panelist”. Over 100 attended.

- Congratulations to Dr. Susan Kornstein who was named to the Top 40 Healthcare Transformers of 2017 by Medical Marketing & Media (MM&M).

- Congratulations to Dr. Sandy Barker for being the recipient of a Tony Stewart grant for $10,000 to support a Dogs On Call expansion to the Children’s Pavilion.

- Congratulations to Dr. James Bjork on his NIH $5M grant over five years. The ABCD grant has begun launching data collection with real children and parents. Dr. Mike Neale of VIPBG is Co-PI with Dr. Bjork.

- Congratulations to Mrs. Gigi Rosenblatt on publication of her book chapter “Substance Use Disorders in the Adult Population” in the Medical Surgical Nursing textbook.

Farewells

- Our department and friends gathered to bid farewell to Drs. Mary Ellen Olbrisch, James Culbert and Robert Hart at a joint retirement party on June 23 at the Alumni House. Combined, their 100+ years of service to the department and university are a great attestation to their dedication and commitment to their profession.

- Also leaving the department are Dr. Alexis Aplasca, Drs. Joe and Catherine Bledowski, Dr. Rosa Morales-Theodore, Dr. Joel Steinberg, Rose Tyler, RN, and Valerie Bishop, LCSW. We wish them all the best.

- We bid farewell to Samantha (Sam) DiBiase who will leave the Development Office as Lynn Myer’s Assistant and return to the class room at Wilder Middle School in Henrico. She will be teaching 6th Grade English. We will miss Sam’s warm and engaging personality as well as her solid work ethic and enthusiasm.

- We also bid farewell to Kim Bertram who is moving home to Wisconsin after working for us for 18 years. Kim has served the department in many capacities including being the department’s computer guru, M-2 Coordinator for Dr. Cheryl Al-Mateen and at one time, she was the Chairman’s assistant.

Welcome

- We want to welcome Dr. Kathryn Jones and Dr. Dorothy O’Keefe to the Virginia Treatment Center for Children.

- We welcome Ms. Kimberly Wisener to her new role in Intake and Referral here in the department. Kimberley is an Intake Support Assistant and is new to the VCU Health System. We welcome back Mrs. Sylvia Overton, Credentialing, part-time and we also welcome Ms. Kelsey Coleman who is Dr. Gerry Moeller’s new Administrative Assistant.

New VIPBG Administrator

Ms. Tina Constantin became the new Administrator at VIPBG in April. Tina attended college at Lock Haven University in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, where she studied Computer Science and Theatrical Arts. She later enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served for 18 years. Tina’s duties with the Navy included tours as Administrative Officer, Legal Officer, Security Forces Officer and Shipbuilding Specialist. Tina first joined the VCU team in December 2000, working as Fiscal Administrator with the Division of Quality Health Care (Department of Internal Medicine). She then transferred to the Office of Research, Office of Research Subjects Protection (ORSP), where she was the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Coordinator for Panel A. After working with the ORSP for two years, Tina then transferred to the Department of Neurosurgery, where she worked as the Grants and Contracts Administrator and then as the Director of Business Operations for 12 years. For the past four years, Neurosurgery performed fiscal and administrative duties for the Department of Otolaryngology as well.

“While working with Neurosurgery and Otolaryngology, we were extremely committed to providing comprehensive and compassionate care through integrated clinical research and innovative treatment, with our specialties and research inclusive of Brain Tumors, Deep Brain Stimulation, Endovascular and Cerebrovascular surgery, epilepsy surgery and diseases of the ear, nose, throat and related structures of the head and neck. I had the distinct pleasure of working closely with our Ph.D.’s and clinicians, faculty and classified, in all of our research and clinical endeavors.”

“I have gained so much knowledge here at VCU and I will strive to provide the best possible administrative support to VIPBG. This is a relatively new area for me, the research field of genetic study, but it is truly exciting and I look forward to learning more and more in this field and contributing to the VIPBG mission.”