I am proud to announce that our Dean and Colleague, Dr. Peter Buckley, Professor of Psychiatry, is the Chair-elect of the Council of Deans of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

The AAMC is the premiere national organization of academic medicine. Its members include all 152 accredited medical schools in the United States and 17 accredited medical schools in Canada; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Departments of Veteran Affairs medical centers and more than 80 academic societies.

Given the multiple challenges facing academic medicine, it is particularly wonderful that our leader will assume a key role guiding North America's academic medical centers to a productive future.

The search for the Psychiatry Chair is taking shape. The search committee is co-chaired by Dr. Gerry Moeller, Chair of Addiction Psychiatry and Professor of Psychiatry, Pharmacology and Toxic Substances, Associate Vice President for Clinical Research; Director, C. Kenneth and Diane Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research and Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies and Dr. Alex Valadka, Chair of VCU Neurosurgery. Members of the committee include: James Bjork, Ph.D. (Psychiatry), David Cifu, M.D. (Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation), Ralph Clark, III, M.D. (Chief Medical Officer), Harinder Dhindsa, M.D. (Emergency Medicine), Michael Fox, D.O. (Addiction Medicine Fellow), Rashelle Hayes, Ph.D. (Psychiatry), Christopher Kogut, M.D. (Psychiatry), Kenneth Kendler, M.D. (Psychiatry), James Levenson, M.D. (Psychiatry), Alexandria Lewis, Ed.D. (Psychiatry), Gretchen McCandless, Ph.D. (Anatomy & Neurobiology), Vanessa Sheppard, Ph.D. (Health Behavior and Policy), Albert Smith, M.D. (Neurology), Rachel Waller, M.D. (Internal Medicine), and Paul Wesolowski, (Chief Operating Officer).

The well-known search firm, Isaacson-Miller, has already visited and is launching a national search. Dr. Buckley commissioned an external review of the Department to inform the process. We all (especially me) should feel very positive about the process and expect an outcome which will greatly strengthen our already nationally and internationally prominent department.

Our philanthropy efforts are being very productive. I am pleased to announce an anonymous one million dollar gift coupled with another anonymous $3.5 million dollar bequest to support scientific progress at the Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics. The bequest comes from the estate of a doctor who graduated from our residency and practiced Psychiatry.

Of note on the back page of this newsletter, please join me in congratulating Ms. Lisa Davis on her recent recognition from the March of Dimes as Behavioral Nurse of the Year. This is the third year in a row a VCU Department of Psychiatry Nurse has won this prestigious honor. We are fortunate to have an outstanding nursing team!

Lastly, I wish you and your families a meaningful holiday season.
Photo of PGY 1’s with Dr. Sandy Barker, Director of the Center for Human Animal Interaction and Dr. Joy Sanders, SOM Asst. Dean of Development, Fozzie’s handler along with first year residents, Drs. Katherine Shalit, Alex Ambrose, Sher Tucker, Megan Small and Tiffanee Brown.

Annual Pups On The Plaza

The annual Pups On The Plaza fundraiser and fun activity was attended by over 550 people this year. Everyone enjoyed the hot dogs and fixings as well as getting to know about the wonderful work the dogs do with patients. Seen above are Wrigley, Zeus and Callie with guests, handlers and volunteers with C.H.A.I. Photos by Jordan Vance.

Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine

Dr. Cheryl Al-Mateen is our most recent ELAM fellow and she follows fellow ELAM graduates Drs. Susan Kornstein and Bela Sood. VCU has had 13 ELAM fellows and Dr. Al-Mateen was joined by Dr. Joyce Lloyd from Genetics this year.

ELAM is a core program of Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, PA. The program continues the legacy of advancing women in medicine that began in 1850 with the founding of the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, the nation’s first women’s medical school and a predecessor of today’s Drexel University College of Medicine.

The Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® (ELAM®) program is a year-long part-time fellowship for women faculty in schools of medicine, dentistry, public health and pharmacy. The program is dedicated to developing the professional and personal skills required to lead and manage in today’s complex health care environment, with special attention to the unique challenges facing women in leadership positions. More than 1,000 ELAM alumnae hold leadership positions in institutions around the world.

For additional information about the program please visit: www.drexel.edu/elam
Renovation of North 3 and North 4 units is progressing well and slightly ahead of schedule. The new TMS therapy room and a large shared office for nurse practitioners are ready and TMS is now being done in the new room. A second TMS machine is being added in December. We continue to have response rates in the 60-65% range with the therapy for Major Depression. We expect the new ECT suite to be ready by December 1, 2018.

Dr. Pandurangi was the invited speaker for the annual scientific oration of his Alma Mater in India on August 6 (JIPMER, Pondicherry, India). The oration was well received and entitled Brain Stimulation Therapies in Psychiatry.

Dr. Pandurangi provided the annual psychiatric update to the Central Virginia Chapter of NAMI on November 8. More than 100 people attended. On the same day, he also provided an interactive session to a community engagement class by the VCU Department of Community Education on the topic of the “scope and boundaries of mental disorders, factors influencing diagnosis, medication use and overuse and related issues”.

The Division of Inpatient Psychiatry and Hospital Medicine are collaborating on developing guidelines for prompt consultation on psychiatric inpatients who have insulin dependent diabetes to enhance quality and safety of care.
Congratulations

- To Jazmine Brown on the birth of her daughter, Layla Rain Beasley, born at VCU Medical Center at 10:40 a.m. on November 6, 2018. She weighed 6 lbs. 1 oz. and was 19.5 inches in length.
- To Joel Silverman, M.D. who has been selected as this year’s Chair Award recipient at the 11th Annual Chair Summit in Fort Lauderdale, FL in February.
- To Ken Kendler, M.D. who was presented with the C. Charles Burlingame Award by the Institute of Living in October.
- To Lisa Davis, BSN, M.Ed., RN-BC, for winning the March of Dimes Behavioral Nurse of the Year Award.
- To Sandy Barker, Ph.D. on receiving Florida State University’s outstanding alumni award “Grads Made Good”.
- To Bela Sood, M.D. who will lead the Virginia Mental Health Access Program for the Central Virginia Region in a $450,000 grant to improve access to child mental health services.
- To Susan Jones, M.D., a third place winner of “Best Bedside Manner” from Richmond Magazine.

Welcome & Farewell

- On December 2 our Motivate Clinic welcomed a new Nurse Practitioner, Ms. Danielle Wittig. She will be featured in an upcoming Chair Letter.
- We also welcome Ms. Shakena Cotman to our Motivate Clinic. She joins Ms. Leah Vito and Ms. Valencia Devane as Customer Care Providers.
- We welcome Ms. Logan Wade to JC 3 as an Intake Professional.
- At VTCC we welcome new employee Ms. Kimberly Gantt.
- We will be welcoming Rizwan Ali, M.D. as an Associate Professor in the Outpatient Division early in 2019.
- We bid a fond farewell to Greg King, who has served as Associate Administrator, and who will be relocating with his family to Dallas, TX after January 3, 2019.

Condolences

- To Pamela Copeland on the death of her Mother, Mrs. Hazel Irene Hawkins of Newport News on November 27, 2018.
- To PGY-2 Dr. Alyssa Warren on the recent death of her Mother, Dr. Jan Marie Carter.

McGuire VAMC News

Recovery from mental health conditions is a long-term process with the ultimate goal being full participation in community activities. To assist Veterans in their recovery process, the McGuire VAMC employs four Occupational Therapists who are located in mental health clinics. The American Occupational Therapy Association cites growing evidence that OT interventions can improve outcomes for those living in the community with serious mental illness. OT’s may incorporate aspects of a Veteran’s psychotherapy into a group or individual treatment to help reinforce specific skills, help develop compensatory strategies to promote independence in instrumental activities of daily living, like money or medication management and help with social skills development. OT at McGuire plays a vital role in helping our Veterans develop the skills they need to engage in meaningful and productive lives.

Welcome to Brendan Hayes, L.C.S.W.

I am Brendan Hayes and I came here to work in the department with the EAP program and the general outpatient clinic recently. I was born and raised in Washington, DC., the youngest of nine children and the seventh son. My father was a neurosurgeon and spent the bulk of his working years in the Army Medical Corp. My mother had a Master’s degree in Latin and taught briefly before raising her family. We lived in Japan for a period when I was young, and travelled around the Far East. I attended Catholic Schools for twelve years and then came to VCU for college. I majored in Rehabilitation Counseling and completed the ADERP (Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Program) tract in order to become a certified addiction therapist. After working as a counselor in a variety of treatment settings I returned to VCU to earn my MSW. From there I worked with Henrico CSB, eventually becoming the Program Manager for the Substance Abuse and Jail Mental Health Services. I stayed with Henrico CSB for seventeen years. In 2011 I went into private practice and opened an outpatient addictions treatment program for the Family Counseling Center of Recovery. We sold the FCCR this past year and wanting to continue clinical work I was fortunate to find a position with the MCV Department of Psychiatry.

My wife Elaine and I recently celebrated our 34th wedding anniversary. We have two sons, age 26 and 22 and our oldest son was married this Fall and works as an engineer in Nashville. Our younger son graduated from Virginia in May and is working as a medical scribe. Elaine is an artist in the Richmond community and has taught for many years. She is now painting full-time. I have several interests and activities. I have loved whitewater canoeing for many years and spend a lot of time on the James River. I enjoy all types of exercise and love a variety of sports. In the past year I have started to get re-involved with backpacking and look forward to increasing my time in the woods. Self-care is incredibly important in order to be able to do the type of work that we do as therapists. I am enjoying the wide range of patients that I am able to see in this position.
The ABCD study (http://abcdstudy.org) has completed its recruitment, which yielded 11,877 9-10 year-old children. This ambitious project is a coordinated data collection effort across 20 university centers across the US, of which VCU’s Department of Psychiatry is one. Drs. Bjork and Neale lead the VCU effort, which is one of four that specializes in collecting twin pairs: the other three are Washington University St. Louis, University of Colorado at Boulder, and the University of Minnesota. Together these sites have assessed over 800 pairs of twins, which makes for a very valuable set of genetically informative data. What is especially remarkable about the study is the variety and depth of the assessments, which typically take each child about seven hours to complete. Since the acronym ABCD stands for Adolescent Brain and Cognitive Development, it is unsurprising that brain imaging consumes quite a large part of the protocol. A full structural Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan is obtained to measure the surface area and thickness of the cortex of the brain at very high resolution (hundreds of thousands of points on each hemisphere). The volumes of many subcortical structures such as the hippocampus and amygdala are also measured. Functional MRI studies observe blood flow - an index of activity - in different locations when the study participants are challenged with various cognitive tasks. In between the scans, the children and their parent or guardian complete various pen and pencil or iPad-based tasks designed to assess psychopathology, substance use and their risk factors. Altogether, the data total over 30,000 measures on each child!

The study has a first rate quality-control manager, Margie Hernandez, who visits every site every year and who undertakes the entire protocol. Her visits ensure that the protocols are carefully matched across all sites! She is extremely meticulous, so the team was especially proud to hear that the VCU protocol was the best she had seen in two years of evaluations!

Drs. Neale, Maes and Hunter (Georgia Tech, Department of Psychology) have developed a new genetic model which allows for effects of site, and which combines both twin and non-twin study participants’ data to maximize statistical power. Preliminary results from approximately 4,500 participants show good agreement with prior studies for well-studied traits such as height and weight, as well as many of the behavioral and psychological variables. The neuroimaging variables, however, show fairly substantial effects of site, which are likely due to the different MRI scanner technologies being used at the 20 locations. New methods for removing such technological artifacts - changes in the imaging data analysis pipelines - are currently showing great promise in registering the same information. These methods rely heavily on the images of Ms. Hernandez’ brain taken during her quality control visits.

Children aged 9-10 years are unlikely to have used cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs. The rationale for starting to study children at this age is to provide a baseline assessment, against which future assessments can be compared. ABCD is a longitudinal study, with interview/questionnaire measures every year and MRI assessments in alternate years. At the recent annual meeting of the study’s principal investigators, NIH officials announced that the next phase of the project would be for seven years, by which time the participants should be 20 years old. The investigators, and the hardworking RAs (see picture) will no doubt have aged somewhat by then.
The Children’s Mental Health Resource Center (CMHRC) fills a unique and critical role in Richmond and across Virginia. As a GPS for Children’s Mental Health, their mission is to improve access by providing navigation services that help bridge the gap between primary care and mental health needs. Navigation services include both peer support and referral assistance and are provided free of charge and available to anyone in Virginia.

The navigation process is individualized for each family. Navigators utilize a robust database maintained by the CMHRC to connect children with psychiatrists, therapists, or other services that: 1) accept the child’s insurance, 2) are geographically close to the family’s home, and 3) are accepting new patients with minimal wait times, when possible. Navigators also connect families with resources such as support groups and special education assistance. A final important element of the navigation process includes follow-up calls to support families in every step along their journey. During the last fiscal year (FY2018), 90% of the families who were provided with referrals attended their appointments and 81% of these families were also happy with their providers.

Since this program began in the summer of 2011, more than 7,000 families have been referred to the CMHRC and received support. The CMHRC receives an average of six new referrals each day and navigators usually respond to families within one business day.

For many years, the CMHRC operated out of a small office space in Richmond without strong connections to the VCU Health campus. However, in April 2018, the program moved into the new Virginia Treatment Center for Children (VTCC) building. The CMHRC is conveniently positioned inside the building’s main lobby. This has greatly increased awareness of CMHRC services to providers within the Children’s Hospital of Richmond community and also allows navigators to serve families in more face-to-face interactions (rather than only via phone).

Recently, one of the navigators worked with the VTCC inpatient team to help a teenager who survived a suicide attempt. The navigator listened to the mother’s story and helped facilitate coordination of outpatient services for this family in the Fredericksburg area. The mom shared her experience in a recent letter to the team. "I was dying inside but everyone treated me with such kindness. It was such a frightening time...Thank you for listening to my story. Now I can see that [my child] is a mental health success story and I'm ready to tell my side."

The program is supported through grants and individual funding from organizations such as the Cameron Gallagher Foundation, the Healthy Minds Campaign, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, Jackson Foundation, Jenkins Foundation, the Advisory Council of VTCC, and the City of Richmond, as well as in-kind assistance from the Child and Adolescent Division of the VCU Department of Psychiatry.

To refer a family for navigation assistance or to learn more about the CMHRC, visit their website at: www.mentalhealth4kids.org.

Written by Rachel Reynolds
Program Manager