

Chairman's Message

by Douglas M. Ziedonis, MD, MPH

Welcome to this inaugural issue of *Psychiatry Connections*! We have had other newsletters before, but this marks a new streamlined online version and renewed effort to increase communication to you and others in the Department and beyond. We look forward to your [feedback and input](#) on the value of this newsletter to you, how to improve the newsletter, how you might contribute to future issues, and on best ways to provide you with updated information. Thanks for your ongoing teamwork and commitment to excellence in patient care, training the next generation, and research that helps discover and evaluate new approaches and innovations. There is a lot going on in our Department and many external changes that are influencing all our work.



There is so much that could be shared, but I want to first thank everyone for your ongoing contributions and great ideas. Many thanks to Mary Ahn and the Career Development & Research Office (CDRO) team for putting together this online newsletter. As you all know, they provide many activities to support faculty, staff, and trainees. The CDRO's new leadership college and coaching program are two examples of extremely innovative programs that are receiving rave reviews.

In our last Department meeting, I shared the results of our recent engagement survey and how many of you feel less engaged and aligned with our larger health care system. We want to understand that better and want to do more to help you all feel more connected, have the resources and information available to improve your work life, and to understand and be aligned with the priorities of both the System and the Department.

The *Psychiatry Connection* Newsletter is but one small way to increase connections. There are over 360 faculty members in the Department of Psychiatry supported by over 2000 staff and training many trainees from different disciplines. Some of the stories of these individuals are part of this newsletter. We plan to resume our reach out meetings to your local areas to listen to your feedback, input and ideas.

Changes are affecting all [our mission areas](#). We've been through some substantial changes in our outpatient clinical practice setting with our move from the Shrewsbury street location and we anticipate more changes in our expansion in primary care settings with integrated care and the rapid increase of inpatient beds in Central Massachusetts. Alan Brown has been providing outstanding leadership in the system's Population Health and Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) with Patrick Smallwood now providing outstanding leadership for Adult Services at the Medical Center. Negar Beheshti is leading with excellence the Child and Adolescent clinical services as Jean Frazier added on the Directorship of the E.K. Shriver Center. UMass Memorial is switching its Electronic Health Record to EPIC and Cezar Cimeanu is leading the effort for Psychiatry. There are new Psychiatric Hospitals in Devens and Westborough with planned openings this Fall which will help provide needed beds in the region and enhance recruitment

of new psychiatrists and psychologists. Jeff Geller, Paul Noroian, Caroline McGrath, and Tony Jackson are providing outstanding leadership at Worcester Recovery Center & Hospital as the case loads become more complicated with increasing need for expertise in forensic issues. We anticipate new potentials for faculty in the Veterans Affairs Health Care System here on University Campus with the Behavioral Health team of the Veteran's Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Worcester moving on campus to the ACC building this summer. A big thanks to Dana Weaver, Kristin Mattocks, David Smelson and Gerardo Gonzalez in these VA changes.

This year's Department Research Day on March 31st showcases our commitment, findings, innovation, and impact in Integrated Behavioral Health Care. We are honored to have Marina Broitman, PhD, a top leader from PCORI (Patient Care Oriented Research Institute), be the keynote speaker to provide us with insights on where PCORI funding priorities and the cutting edge areas in this important area of focus. A big thank you to Nancy Byatt and the Research Day team who have put together a wonderful event. Research funding is harder to obtain and new funding opportunities are being pursued in addition to trying harder at the traditional NIH, SAMHSA, and VA funding sources. In spite of these pressures, we overall continue to be successful in obtaining new funds although not without pressure for many. A big thank you to our research team leaders, including Bill McIlvane, David Smelson, Jean Frazier, Andrew Tapper, Jean King, Maryann Davis, Tony Rothschild, Xiaoduo Fan, Gerardo Gonzalez, and the many faculty and staff supporting these research teams.

On the Educational side, the medical school is expanding the student class size and there are new student sites with the partnership with Baystate as a regional campus and Cape Cod Hospital as a new location. Thanks to Yael Dvir's and Cindy Snell's tireless efforts to enhance the medical students experience. We just completed very successful Psychiatry Residency Program and Psychology Internship matches and welcome an outstanding group of new residents and interns to join our existing group of outstanding residents and interns. Thanks to the leadership of Sheldon Benjamin, Mary Ahn, Auralydy Padilla, Vickie White, Andrea Glassman, Jack Terry, and the faculty and trainees whose help was critical in the interviewing season. This year's graduation day for the residents is Thursday, June 16th and the interns will be in August. A big thanks to all the graduates for your amazing contributions, and we are fortunate that some of you will continue to work in the Department as faculty or post-docs.

This issue of *Psychiatry Connections* is intended to help you connect with some colleagues in the Department and we are eager to get your ideas and feedback for future issues. In the spirit of increasing your alignment with the Department's key goals and priorities I encourage you to link to our [website for more details](#). I'll provide more specifics in our next issue of the newsletter, including our priorities and new efforts to integrate missions in our work for transitional age youth, college mental health, the opioid epidemic, geriatric psychiatry, integrated care and expanding psychiatric inpatient and outpatient services.

We look forward to your feedback and input. Thanks!

Best wishes.

Doug

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