

# The PsychList

~A modern "spin" on UBMD Psychiatry news and events~



## A Note from the Chair...



Steven Dubovsky, MD,  
Department Chair

We have recently had very erudite discussions on respecting people’s sensitivities about their characteristics and beliefs such as their ethnicity, race, or the kind of person they identify as. Taken to its extreme, whatever identity one professes, no matter how unlikely, should be accepted at face value at the risk of being considered insensitive or bigoted. In clinical practice, such approaches are tempered by the pitfalls in accepting at face value what may be a more complex disturbance of identity than the patient believes. Clinical decision making also involves the ways in which we handle our own sensitivities. In our personal lives, there is often good reason not to put up with demeaning behavior, but should we prohibit rudeness or outright personal attacks of patients who have no other way of making themselves feel better than trying to make us feel worse, or should we point out the deficit in self-esteem that underlies this behavior without taking it personally?

What about acutely ill psychotic patients whose epithets are the result of global dysregulation of aggression and personal coherence? When do we diagnose and treat our patients’ behavior before we judge it, and when is it important for the integrity of both the patient and ourselves to confront offensive verbal devaluation? When we recognize that there is no valid all-or-nothing directive for such judgments, wisdom replaces rote certainty.

What about everyday situations in which individuals or groups attached to a particular social or political identity demand absolute acceptance their assertion, not only of who they are, but who we are? Does one owe uncritical deference to those with whom one sympathizes, but not even vague interest in anyone viewed as an outsider? It is now almost axiomatic that people with compatible beliefs must only listen to each other, and that any ideas that deviate from accepted ideology are “not us,” and therefore wrong or evil.

Psychiatrists and other mental health specialists are particularly well-equipped to avoid rigid, all-or-nothing group identities that stifle adaptability; however, in today’s society they are not immune from the temptation to choose one or another absolutist side in ongoing debates that go nowhere because neither side listens to the other.

I think that this is what happened when a member of our faculty and a member of our departmental advisory board announced that they would divide themselves permanently from the Department of Psychiatry because a member of the advisory board was a “divisive” person whose reputation they abhorred based on statements attributed to that person but not personal interactions. The intensity of emotion about this issue seemed to have abated until I was informed by another faculty member that the department accepting a gift from the same individual directed toward expanding community engagement would be unacceptable because of the donor’s divisive reputation. No one seemed to see any value in reconciliation of people with different views or in modifying their own beliefs, including their beliefs of what other people believe.

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### Special points of interest

- Awards
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# Taking Offense

Submitted By: Steven Dubovsky, MD, Department Chair

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In psychiatry, unwavering resistance to information that is in conflict with what we are sure we already know makes it impossible to process meaningful data from patients and other practitioners, much of which is communicated through interaction and not speeches, position statements, or tweets. The same is true in organizations like ours. If we don't have the expectation that we will listen to each other dispassionately, we can't synthesize our differences of opinion and move our profession forward. To paraphrase Dr. King, you can't dispel darkness with darkness; only with light. And light that will not engage with the outside world cannot shine on anything. A great strength of our department is our trust in our ability to resolve our disagreements when we can, maintain our personal beliefs while understanding others' points of view, and respect each other no matter how much we agree or disagree.

## "A Joy that is Shared is a Joy Made Double"

-John Roy

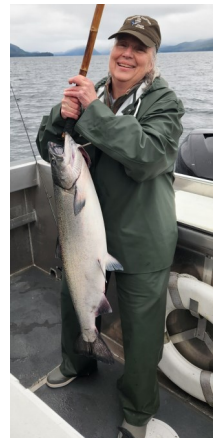
The pictures below represent a small collection of our colleagues' interests and talents outside of the workplace. Please consider submitting a picture to be shared in future editions of the quarterly newsletter!



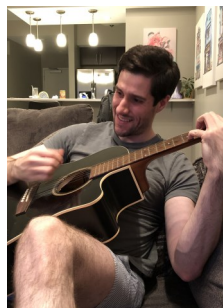
Dinner and dessert, anyone? Feast your eyes on the rack of rabbit, glazed carrots, peas & herbs, and pickled fennel provided by Dr. Russ Pizzo, while Amy Berek displays her homemade cookies.



Fishing Alaskan King Salmon is a tough job, but Margaret Uebler-Otoka was able to tackle it!



Make some noise for the talented Dr. Michael DiGiacomo, playing saxophone, and Dr. Charles Camp, playing guitar.

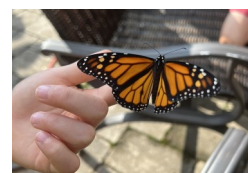


Dr. Yogesh Bakhai after the completion of another marathon.



To quote Charlotte Moss, "There are two things that make a room timeless: a sense of history and a piece of the future."

Dr. Sourav Sengupta embodies this with his piece of homemade furniture, while Julie Mikula does the same by restoring a 45 year old family rocking chair.



Who knew Dr. Tori Brooks had such a green thumb? Displayed are photos from her butterfly and flower gardens.



# 2022 Faculty/Staff Appreciation Awards

The Department of Psychiatry, along with the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York, proudly honored the recipients of Faculty and Staff Appreciation Awards for their Outstanding Contributions in the following:

**Vinayak Gokhale, MD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Clinical Mission of the Department



**Michael Guppenberger, MD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Clinical Mission of the Department

**Michael DiGiacomo, MD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

**Suzu Asikihia, MD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

**Michael Guppenberger, MD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Medical Student Education



**Jennifer Haak, MD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Medical Student Education

**Robert Garlan, MD**  
Resident Education  
Dr. Stephen Scheiber Award



**Sarah Gibbons, MD**  
Resident Education  
Dr. Stephen Scheiber Award

**Barry Willer, PhD**  
Professor  
Research in the Department  
Dr. Kenneth Altshuler Award



**John Leddy, MD**  
Clinical Professor  
Research in the Department  
Dr. Kenneth Altshuler Award

**Dori Marshall, MD**  
Associate Professor  
Overall Contribution  
Dr. Josie Olympia Award



**Amy Berek**  
Associate Chair of Operations  
Outstanding Contributions  
Department of Psychiatry

**Kathy Benz**  
Psychiatry Department Administrator  
Excellence in Staff Contributions

**Aundrea Sanders**  
Buffalo Public Schools  
Excellence in the Community

The 100+ award recognizes outstanding contributions from our volunteer faculty whom have contributed over 100 hours of teaching, mentoring, and service annually within the Department of Psychiatry. This year's honorees include:

**Laura Benedict**

**Kristen Cercone**

**Navpreet Kaur**

**Chelsey McCabe**

**Alison McGuerty**

**Sadiq Rahman**

**Diana Sanderson**

## Pearl Birnbaum Hurwitz Humanism in Healthcare Award

The Pearl Birnbaum Hurwitz Humanism Award is presented each year to a woman who exemplifies humanism and has advanced—through her scholarship, advocacy, or leadership—the well-being of underserved populations in the healthcare arena. This award was established in 2014 to honor Ms. Birnbaum Hurwitz, a pioneer in the movement to provide services and support for children with disabilities and their families.

This year, Dr. Jennifer Haak has been selected as a 2022 Honorable Mention recipient of the Pearl Birnbaum Hurwitz Humanism in Healthcare Award. Dr. Haak's innovative contributions and commitment to the field of General and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and equity in healthcare access in the City of Buffalo and Western New York is commendable. Dr. Haak's dedication to creating public health initiatives and improving access to psychiatric services for all members of a racial, cultural, and socioeconomically diverse community is inspiring, and so very deserving of recognition.

Please join the Department of Psychiatry in congratulating Dr. Jennifer Haak on this distinguished recognition!



Congratulations to Michael Guppenberger, MD, on being selected as a recipient of ECMC's DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. The DAISY Foundation, an organization for the elimination of diseases attacking the immune system, established the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses to recognize the very special work nurses do every day.

To be considered for the DAISY Award, nominees exhibit highly valued qualities and attributes including:

- ◇ Demonstrating professionalism in the work environment
- ◇ Job performance exemplifying the mission, vision, and value of ECMC
- ◇ Collaboration with the health care team to meet patients' needs
- ◇ Using critical thinking skills in the delivery of extraordinary patient care
- ◇ Demonstrating excellent interpersonal skills with peers and co-workers
- ◇ Modeling empathy and demonstrating a caring attitude in all situations
- ◇ Excellent educating of patients and their families
- ◇ Consistently focusing on meeting patient and family goals



Thank you, Dr. Guppenberger, for displaying these characteristics on a daily basis and for being an outstanding role model!

## Hats Off!



Congratulations to the following PGY-1 psychiatry interns who have recently received an *Intern of the Month Award*:

Dr. Sharlo Mayless—Module C, ECMC  
Dr. Sarah Moses—Module D, BGMC  
Dr. Kevin Rogers—Module D, VA

At the end of each module, the Chief Residents at each hospital site (ECMC, BGMC, and VA) choose the intern of the month. Each award winner has been recognized based on their hard work, dedication, and passion to the profession of psychiatry.

# Understanding the Privacy Specifics of Psychotherapy Notes

Submitted By: Agnes Macakanja, BA, CPC

## **Question:**

A patient of our practice is demanding that we release all of her medical records, including the psychotherapy notes written by a psychologist during each session. Are these notes protected under HIPAA?



## **Answer:**

Yes. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), providers do not have to give patients copies of their psychotherapy notes. Contrary to popular belief, HIPAA does not provide special protection to mental health records in general, but it does give added protection to psychotherapy notes, according to HIPAA legal analysts. Unlike other protected information, a provider may deny a patient or representative access to these notes.

## **Reason:**

Psychotherapy notes are the unique written impressions of the individual provider. "Psychotherapy notes are notes that a mental health professional takes during a conversation with a patient. They are kept separate from the patient's medical and billing records. HIPAA also does not allow the provider to make most disclosures about psychotherapy notes about {a patient} without {a patient's} authorization", according to the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) guidance.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule defines psychotherapy notes as notes recorded in any medium by the mental health provider for the purpose of documenting and scrutinizing "the contents of a conversation during a private counseling session or a group, joint, or family counseling session that are separated from the rest of the patient's medical record."

Psychotherapy notes can perhaps be best described by what they are not. According to the regulatory provision (45 CFR 164.501), they exclude medication prescription and monitoring, counseling session start and stop times, the frequencies of treatment furnished, results of clinical tests, and any summary of:

- ◆ Diagnosis
- ◆ Functional status
- ◆ Treatment plan
- ◆ Symptoms
- ◆ Prognosis
- ◆ Progress to date



Unlike other protected health information, only the author of the psychotherapy notes may use the notes for the treatment of the patient. The use and disclosure by others for purposes of treatment, payment, or for other reasons, generally require authorization by the patient.

The Neuroscience and Behavior course is fast approaching! Drs. Camp and DiGiacomo are excited to be leading their very first run of the Psychiatry module for the MS2's from 1/23/23 – 2/10/23. Given the consistently high marks the course has received, we have opted to maintain it largely as is with some minor changes. Most notably, and perhaps unsurprisingly to those familiar with our film club involvement, we will be adding back in a day dedicated to viewing and discussing the wonderful film Ordinary People, which had been removed by Sergio a few years back. We have both had the pleasure of moderating this film discussion during past years of the course and we've enjoyed it so much that we want to continue the tradition. We are so grateful to all the faculty and residents who have agreed to continue their involvement in the course this year. It wouldn't be the success that it is without all your talents. We look forward to seeing you at the school!

## Medical Education

Submitted By:

Charles Camp, MD,  
Director of Medical Education

Michael DiGiacomo, MD,  
Assistant Director of Medical  
Education

Leanne Hatswell,  
Medical Education Coordinator



All electronic passports effective 01/09/23!

## Residency News

Submitted By: Cynthia Pristach, MD

A lot has been happening in the General Psychiatry Residency Program! Residents from the Medical Educator Track gave a presentation about "Microaggressions in the Clinical Setting" to both faculty and residents. We all learned about what microaggressions are, the harm they can do, and ways to address them. Thank you, MET members!

The PGY-1 residents completed their training in internal medicine and neurology, and joined us in psychiatry! Welcome! We are so happy to have you start your training with us. Residents attended a great holiday gathering which was planned by the Wellness Committee.

The holiday weekend storm was a major challenge which was met with devotion, determination, and a pretty darned good attitude. Two residents (Omar Shawaf and Sharlo Bayless) spent a long weekend in the hospital, working in the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Room, helping out on the floors, as well as in other parts of the hospital. A third resident (Siobhan Brady) braved her way in to provide some relief. Other residents tried very hard to make it into the hospital, but were unable to do so because of major snow in their neighborhoods. There was great communication among residents, and the Chief Residents really took charge and helped sort out the coverage situations. The covering psychiatry attendings were terrific as well, working in conjunction with the Chiefs and (stuck) residents to provide good patient care as well as adequate rest periods. Thank you to all for your selflessness, great attitudes, and work ethic!



Please join the Department of Psychiatry in congratulating the following physicians named to Western New York Top Doctors:

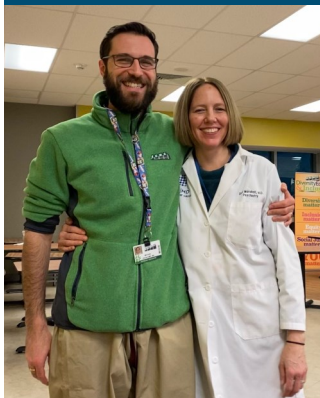
Michael S. Adragna, MD  
Yogesh D. Bakhai, MD  
Paula A. DelRegno, MD



Annemarie Mikowski, DO  
Joshna Singh, MBBS  
Beth A. Smith, MD

## Working Through a Blizzard

Submitted By: Michael DiGiacomo, MD



Dr. Mike DiGiacomo and Dr. Dori Marshall

Working at ECMC during the blizzard was like living in a college dorm for a long weekend during the zombie apocalypse. I lived out of my office and went down to the cafeteria for carefully rationed meals three times each day. I was grateful that the ECMC cafeteria had enough food for all of the staff and members of the community who were stranded at ECMC. My close friend and former mentor, Dr. Marshall, was also stranded at ECMC - we shared meals and long conversations together when we were not covering the hospital with our clinical obligations. I also reconnected with my good friend from residency, Dr. Gibbons, who was stuck at ECMC. I was grateful for their company and friendship during this strange long-weekend.

On Christmas Eve, I watched the Buffalo Bills defeat the Chicago Bears with two of my patients on the adolescent unit. This time together watching the game gave me the unique opportunity to catch up with them. One of these patients had previously explained that she did not at all like working with me. But after we did a coloring Christmas craft together, I think our relationship improved.

Every other year of my life, the days leading up to Christmas would be filled with wrapping presents, seeing my best friends from high school who were in from Los Angeles and Washington DC, listening to Christmas CDs on our stereo (Vince Guaraldi, Frank Sinatra, and Dean Martin), and helping my wife, Ann, with Christmas presents for our children. I really missed all of that this year. It was strange to see a video and photos of our children running downstairs to see what Santa brought for them. It was like their Christmas was happening in a different universe and a different dimension, because I was at ECMC. It felt like a stressful Sunday and not at all like Christmas. Ann lost power on Christmas Day and the house went down to 51 degrees. She and our children went to bed wearing their winter hats, gloves and scarves, snuggled up in one bed to stay warm.

Being stranded at ECMC at Christmas time reminded me, much like the coronavirus pandemic, that there are many factors we cannot control. It also made me realize how fortunate I am. I am fortunate to have survived the blizzard. I tried to go home that Friday afternoon, but turned around two blocks away from the hospital. The visibility was so poor that I had difficulty finding my way back to the ECMC driveway. I am lucky that I made it back without my car going off the road or breaking down.

Our family had a joyous reunion the day after Christmas when I was able to make it back to our home in Williamsville. I hugged my wife and children - my son had tears in his eyes. I was relieved that our family was reunited and that we had all survived the blizzard safely!

### Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship News

Submitted By:

Elizabeth Sengupta, MAT  
Training Program Administrator

Congratulations to all of our newly board certified psychiatrists!

All three of our second fellows, **Dr. Jonathan Davila**, **Dr. Joshua Nazirbaje**, and **Dr. Kushagra Nijhara**, passed their adult board exams!

Recent graduates, **Dr. Tejpal Bedi**, **Dr. Jill Frodey**, **Dr. San Kwak**, and **Dr. Felix Matos Padilla** all passed their Child Boards!



## Quotable Quotes

*"You don't have to be crazy to work here. We'll train you."*

-Author Unknown

*"The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it's the same problem you had last year."*

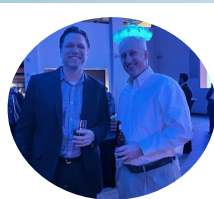
-John Foster Dulles



## Comic Corner



## Candid



## Calling All Writers...

If you would like to contribute to future editions of the quarterly UBMD Psychiatry Newsletter, please contact Julie Mikula at [juliemik@buffalo.edu](mailto:juliemik@buffalo.edu) or at (716) 898-3597. All submissions must be received on or before March 17, 2023 to be included in the next edition, published in April 2023. Thanks, in advance, for your input!

