

# The PsychList

April 2022

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



## A Note from the Chair...



Steven Dubovsky, MD,  
Department Chair

Despite the many constraints on our activities, our department has continued to thrive over the recent stressful years. We were able to continue to provide outstanding care to inpatients and CPEP patients despite a flood of difficult patients, a reduced trickle of openings at BPC backing up all the acute services, dangerous antisocial individuals the correctional system will not deal with being left at ECMC, and requirements to quarantine patients with positive COVID tests by scattering them throughout the hospital and the emergency department. We shifted seamlessly to virtual outpatient care and back, and we continued our commitments to our students and our community partners. At a time when many groups remained sequestered, we were able to conduct our September conference and our winter faculty & staff recognition dinner with a lot of camaraderie and no mishaps. And in a time of cutbacks and restrictions, we have grown.

Along these lines, I am delighted to announce that two new faculty members will be joining our inpatient service this summer- Alia Syed from our residency, and Julia Ringel, who is moving here from Albany. Sara Lowmaster, an expert in psychometrics and outcomes research, will also be joining us this summer. University funding for this position, and for Mike Adragna as Director of our Division of Medical Student Wellness, was just approved by the new Dean after a re-analysis of requests that had been ratified by Dr. Cain. Charles Camp remains Assistant Clerkship Director. Passing these very vigorous reviews is a testament to the reputation and the potential of our department. Last but far from least, Katie Beakman will move from the Dean's Office to our department in about a month as we reorganize the increasingly complex administration of the practice plan. All of our contract negotiations have been completed as we add new activities.

Stressful times like these may try us, but they also teach us what we are capable of mastering. As we continue to move forward, we can be assured that we will never stop expanding our horizons, our impact on the health of our community, and the growth of our professions.



## MHA "Professional of the Year" Award



At this year's 60th Anniversary Gala, the Mental Health Association would like to present its "Professional of the Year" award to Dr. Tori Brooks.

The MHA would like to honor Dr. Brooks for her hard work and dedication to helping patients in CPEP, especially throughout the challenges brought on from the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Brooks' commitment to bettering the lives of individuals who are struggling with mental illness is inspiring. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the compassion and devotion by Dr. Brooks to the mental health community.

Please join the Department of Psychiatry in congratulating Dr. Brooks on her most recent achievement!

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### Special points of interest

- Farewell
- Doctor's Day Award

## Employee Spotlight



**Titles:** Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry  
Assistant Clerkship Director

**Location:** ECMC Partial Hospitalization Program in the Adult, Child, and Family Clinic

**Date of Hire:** July 2020

Dr. Charles Camp, MD

Dr. Charles Camp, MD, describes his many roles within the Practice Plan below, along with his most recent addition— involvement with medical education.

**Q:** Can you explain your new position as Assistant Clerkship Director, and what that entails?

**A:** In August of 2021, I was graciously invited by Dr. Sergio Hernandez to join him in running the Psychiatry Clerkship for the third-year medical students. This was an exciting opportunity for me as I've always been interested in medical education. In this new role, I assist Sergio in a number of clerkship responsibilities including: orienting the new students at the beginning of each 6-week block, running our problem patient conference in which we lead the students in a group reflection about difficult patient encounters they've had during the clerkship, distributing students amongst the various sites, fielding any student questions or issues as they arise, and contributing feedback to the final student evaluations and grades. I've greatly enjoyed the experience so far and am thankful for the opportunity to be more involved in student education.

**Q:** How do you balance the challenge of teaching and precepting students?

**A:** Teaching medical students and residents is both the most challenging and rewarding aspect of my job. As with many other clinical faculty, I always have a fluctuating mix of learners at various levels of knowledge ranging from inexperienced MS3s to seasoned PGY4s, and occasionally even addiction medicine fellows. On a daily basis I have to divvy up the patient encounters to maximize the learning opportunities for each individual and ensure that everyone has something to do suitable to their level of training. I've found that there's really no shortcuts to provide good teaching. It all comes down to the time you're willing to carve out for patient discussions and direct feedback about interviews, presentations, documentation etc. This is a time-consuming process and on busy days it can be very challenging to balance my clinical work with providing the students a good learning experience. On such days I do my best to manage this by mixing in other learning opportunities I don't have to be directly involved in such as having learners observe the DBT groups in the program or providing them with reading material about DBT or personality disorders we commonly see. Though it can certainly be challenging, it is incredibly rewarding to see my learners implement feedback and develop their skills. There's no better feeling for me than seeing learners grow and hearing positive feedback about their experience, and it's been wonderful to keep in touch with students who discover an interest in psychiatry through their time in partial.

**Q:** Do you have any other interests outside of work or special accomplishments you would like to share?

**A:** As far as other activities and interests go, I've recently been exploring an interest in psychoanalysis and am about halfway through a 2-year distance learning course offered by the Center for Modern Psychoanalytic Studies in NYC. The course involves a weekly reading assignment and discussion group about topics like transference, countertransference and analytic listening. It's been a really enriching experience and I hope to continue to deepen my knowledge in this area.

I'm also passionate about film and have had fun hosting film discussions with my partner in crime, Mike DiGiacomo, for both the resident didactics and the medical students. I love to go to the theater and see both mainstream and art house films alike. I'm also a passionate music fan and love to explore a variety of genres including alternative/indie, pop, electronic/dance, and metal. I've been excited to go to more concerts lately as shows have been ramping back up.



## From the Desk of Dr. Sergio Hernandez...



Dear Department,

This July, I will have served 12 wonderful, stimulating, satisfying years in the Department of Psychiatry, so it is with a degree of sadness that I have decided to leave and pursue a different experience. I cannot stress enough how thankful I have been for the support I have received over these last 12 years. This Department, under Dr. Dubovsky's leadership, has allowed me to pursue my every interest and has supported me in all of my endeavors. I will be forever indebted to the kindness and generosity my wife Tara and I received during her illness and treatment. While I have immensely enjoyed these years, I feel called to do something different. I now feel that I need to experience work outside of the Department and academia. I have accepted a position at Best Self running two of their PROS locations, which I believe will be a good fit. Within that agency I hope to build a bridge to the University to create placements for students and residents. I hope to maintain some teaching responsibilities in a volunteer faculty capacity. I will work with Dr. Dubovsky, Dr. Camp, and our exemplary faculty to plan a transition that will be minimally disruptive to our student education program. Thank you all again for your years of support, mentorship, and guidance.

Thank you, Dr. Hernandez, for all of your contributions to the Department of Psychiatry, and best of luck on your new endeavor!

## Congratulations!



Dr. Michael DiGiacomo, MD

Please join the Department in congratulating Michael DiGiacomo, MD, as the recipient of the ***Dare to Soar Award***. This Nursing Award, chosen annually, was presented to Dr. DiGiacomo as part of Doctors' Day 2022.

The certificate awarded to Dr. DiGiacomo states:

"Thank you for demonstrating the continued commitment required to achieve excellence and success. You made the difference."

Thanks Dr. DiGiacomo, and hats off to your achievement!



## Quarterly Coding Tip

Submitted By:  
Agnes Macakanja,  
BA, CPC

### “The Anatomy of the SOAP Note for Behavioral Health”

There have been many formats for documenting patient encounters since the establishment of the 1995 and 1997 Documentation Guidelines for Evaluation and Management Services. The 2021 guidelines mark the biggest change since those guidelines were established.

Using templates in the electronic health record (EHR) has become the standard for documenting patient visits. Templates have some good qualities, but also some poor qualities such as the ability to copy/paste, cookie-cutter, and carry forward documentation.

This uninspired documentation will not make the grade with the 2021 E/M guidelines which state: “Office or other outpatient services include a medically appropriate history and/or physical examination when performed. The extent of history and physical examination is not an element in the selection of the level of office or other outpatient CPT code(s).”

Gone are the days of counting the elements of the history of present illness (HPI), review of systems (ROS), past medical, family, and social history (PFSH), and exam to determine the level of CPT chosen.

**Subjective, Objective, Assessment, and Plan (SOAP)** notes have been a standard for almost 50 years. SOAP allows providers the ability to document patient treatment and care with clarity.



Documentation should now include what it is that the provider feels is relevant to the encounter to support the medical necessity of the encounter, which may include some elements of the history of present illness (HPI), review of systems (ROS), past medical, family, and social history, (PFSH), and exam.

Providers may find that going back to SOAP to document 2021 outpatient services is more helpful in supporting medical necessity.

A brief summary of documentation with SOAP may be of some help with documenting the patient encounter:

#### **SUBJECTIVE**

Includes information provided by the patient regarding his/her experience and perceptions about symptoms, needs, and progress toward goals.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Includes observable objective data (“fact”) regarding the patient, such as elements of a mental status exam or other screening tools, historical information, medications prescribed, lab test or vital signs, as well as the provider’s observation of the patient’s behavior, affect, and speech.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

Includes the provider’s assessment of available subjective and objective information. The assessment summarizes the patient’s status and progress toward the achievement of treatment plan goals.

#### **PLAN**

Documents the steps taken because of the provider’s assessment of the patient’s status, such as follow-up activities, referrals, and/or changes in the treatment plan. The frequency the patient is to be seen in follow-up. This is sometimes a hint at the severity of the problem; A patient not returning for a year likely has a less complex condition than one seen frequently. This may indicate the condition is stable.

The SOAP note ultimately aids in organizing a patient’s information into a succinct and thorough note that promotes the quality of care.



Sources: Magellan. CMS, AAPC, CPT®



# Residency News

Submitted By: Cynthia Pristach, MD

"THANK A RESIDENT WEEK" was celebrated February 21<sup>st</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup> with special events at all hospitals. In addition, medical students were invited to recognize residents who have inspired or motivated them in a special way, and a number of our residents were singled out.

Christian Binns, a PGY-1 resident, was thanked for his guidance during a medical student's internal medicine rotation:

◇ "I had a rough time going through IM but you made it easier. You took time to teach us and looked out for medical students."



Another student acknowledged Lauren Lucente, PGY-1:

◇ "Thank you for being a great educator and pleasure to work with! You were always encouraging towards medical students..."

Austin Milbrand, a PGY-1 resident, was seen as a role model for teaching and including students as part of the team:

◇ "I hope to be as great of an intern as Austin!"



Another medical student described Omar Shawaf, PGY-1, as someone who helped the student feel:

◇ "less lost even during a busy and stressful day!"

Some of our senior residents were also singled out for praise. John DiMeglio, PGY-2, went out of his way "to make sure I was learning what I needed to learn" and Coleman Cosgrove, PGY-4, helped another student with career planning, learning, and answering questions.

All of our residents are excellent teachers and role models for students, evidenced in part by our excellent recruitment to the field of Psychiatry.



Thank you to all residents for your dedication to education, teaching, and mentorship!



## Quotable Quotes

"Everyone brings joy to the office...some when they enter, some when they exit."

- Author Unknown

"By working faithfully eight hours a day, you may eventually get to be boss and work twelve hours a day."

- Robert Frost



## Comic Corner



## Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship News

Submitted By: Sourav Sengupta, MD, MPH

We enjoyed some Thank A Resident activities with our Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows with games and snacks. We are incredibly proud of and so grateful for the work that our Fellows do to care for children and families navigating mental health challenges in Western New York and beyond! Their dedication to patient care, education of medical students and allied residents, and collegiality with faculty and staff across so many care settings is appreciated all around.



## 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 June 17, 2022 to be included in the next edition, published in July 2022. Thanks, in advance, for your input!

