

MINDSCAPES

MGH DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS • SUMMER 2011

Helping Young People Reach Their Potential *The MGH Learning and Emotional Assessment Program (LEAP)*

Her eight-year-old patient had been struggling with developmental delays almost his whole life, says Ellen B. Braaten, PhD, director of the MGH Learning and

Emotional Assessment Program (LEAP). “Despite normal intelligence, he did not begin to speak until he was four because of a significant expressive-receptive language disorder which made it almost impossible to communicate. This young boy was in his own world, was socially awkward and had no friends. He was very lonely.”

The school was planning to place the boy in a classroom for children with severe developmental disabilities. Believing that this would not be the right placement for their son, the parents brought him to LEAP for evaluation. Launched by the MGH Department of Psychiatry in 2008, LEAP is meeting a rapidly growing demand for neuropsychological assessment of children and adolescents.

Nationally, more than 20 percent of all school-aged children are referred for evaluation at some point during their school history, according to Braaten.

VISITS TO SCHOOLS

One of the distinguishing features of LEAP is the on-site school consultation often provided as part of the evaluation process. These services include observations of a child’s behavior in the classroom; observations of proposed classroom placements to determine which placement best fits a child’s needs; and representation at team meetings for a child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

In the case of this young patient, reports Braaten, “We sent one of our psychologists to the school to observe him in the classroom, among his peers. We determined that placement with autistic and

developmentally disabled children would not have been appropriate.” In close consultation with the school and parents, the LEAP professionals were able to convince the school to

construct a language-based learning classroom for him, where the emphasis is on breaking down information into smaller chunks and delivering it at a slower pace so that spoken language development does not interfere with a child’s ability to learn the subject matter.

Because several other children had similar language disorders, the school included them in the new classroom. This means that other ‘misplaced’ children benefited from the LEAP intervention. “This lonely, isolated 8-year-old is now almost 12. His language skills have improved considerably, and he has made social and academic progress,” observes Braaten.

MULTIPLE DOMAINS

Assessment by LEAP psychologists involves looking at multiple domains: academic,

cognitive, emotional and “executive” functions. Executive functions are those skills that allow us to use our intelligence effectively and flexibly, and include abilities such as organization, memory, time management, attention, and task initiation. The team also anticipates future learning needs and can make vocational and career recommendations.

LEAP staff includes seven psychologists with specialty training in pediatric neuropsychological and psychological assessment, three postdoctoral fellows and two interns. They conduct approximately 1,200 assessments a year, incorporating information from other professionals who have contact with the child, such as teachers, therapists and primary care providers.

“Nationally, more than 20 percent of all school-aged children are referred for evaluation at some point during their school history.”

— Ellen Braaten, PhD



LEAP Team Leaders, from left: Brian Willoughby, PhD, Molly Putnam, PhD, Ellen Braaten, PhD, and Kent Wilson, PhD

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Message from the Chief

As we gratefully acknowledge our 16th consecutive year atop the *U.S. News & World Report* ranking of departments of psychiatry, and celebrate our faculty's many years of outstanding service, research and teaching, we are cognizant of the drumbeats on the horizon that signal a time of change that will threaten those in need of what we do and our ability to address those needs.

As this column is being written, legislators are considering cutting the support of post-graduate medical education and the funding for biomedical scientific innovation. The potential impact on our ability to train future psychiatrists and psychologists is particularly worrisome. Private and public studies have underscored the growing shortage of psychiatrists for all age groups. For example, there is only one practicing psychiatrist for every 10,000 children and adolescents in this country.

As a deep and productive department, we know we will endure and continue to contribute so others will suffer less.

The challenges will be considerable, and preserving what we have built will require a spirit of teamwork and dedication to our missions. As always, we will count on ourselves to do more with less and on our friends and supporters to buttress and multiply our efforts, to offer hope to all who are affected by psychiatric suffering.

The LEAP program, featured in this issue of *Mindscapes*, is a stellar example of the multiplier effect. Initiated through philanthropy just three years ago under Dr. Ellen Braaten's leadership, LEAP features a robust and now self-sustaining clinic. Our next priority is to build a fellowship program to expand the pool of psychologists able to assess children's needs from multiple lenses.

Another generative endeavor is the annual MGH Pediatric Bipolar Conference, conducted now in conjunction with The Ryan Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation (pages 4-5). Teaching clinicians in practice and training future generations of experts are a core department mission. With the help of those who understand the benefits of this unique expertise, we will strive to extend these dissemination models in all of our sub-specialty programs. Thank you for your partnership in this effort.



Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD

*Psychiatrist-in-Chief, Massachusetts General Hospital
Stanley Cobb Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School*

Naomi Simon, MD, MSc, Named Director of Anxiety Center

In June 2011, Dr. Naomi M. Simon became director of the Center for Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Disorders. Simon, associate professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, received her MD from Harvard Medical School and Master's in Epidemiology from the Harvard School of Public Health, and began her career at Mass General in 1996 as a fellow in consultation psychiatry.

EXPERTISE IN GRIEF RESPONSE

"Naomi is an outstanding scientist and clinician who is renowned in anxiety disorders and in the emerging field of complicated grief," notes Chief of Psychiatry, Jerrold Rosenbaum, MD. "Her work has helped us to understand when normal grief becomes something more, and has demonstrated the effectiveness of specialized behavioral therapy in reducing the symptoms of complicated grief and restoring sufferers' quality of life. I am delighted to welcome Naomi to the Department of Psychiatry leadership team."

Simon will lead the center's clinical and research activities in the areas of panic disorder, social anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and complicated grief. As a group, anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent of psychiatric illnesses, affecting about 40 million American adults (about 18 percent of people 18 or older).

LEADERSHIP IN HOME BASE

In addition, Simon has been named chief medical officer of the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program. The program provides clinical care and support services to New England-area veterans of the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families, who experience combat or deployment-related stress and/or traumatic brain injury.

In her two leadership roles, Simon succeeds Mark H. Pollack, MD, who recently left Massachusetts General Hospital to become chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Simon plans to build on the center's long tradition of excellence in clinical care, research, teaching and community service. "People suffering from anxiety and stress frequently have a mix of symptoms and disorders, underscoring how heterogeneous and complex these conditions are," observes Simon. "Our goal is to develop more refined diagnostic tools so that we can get patients better faster by making the first intervention the right one."



Naomi M. Simon, MD, MSc

— *The MGH LEAP Program*

(Continued from page 1)

Children, adolescents and young adults evaluated at LEAP have complex learning, emotional, cognitive and developmental disorders. They range in age from 18 months to 25 years; 69 percent are male. One-third are on the autism spectrum, 40 percent have a learning disability and almost 60 percent have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Fifty-eight (58) percent of the patients have more than one diagnosis.

ONGOING INVOLVEMENT

Shannon Rush, now 15 years old, is another child whose life was transformed by LEAP. In the early grades, Shannon was performing significantly below grade level in reading, writing and spelling. Concerned that their daughter's learning was at risk, her parents contacted LEAP. "I wanted the MGH experience and track record for her assessment," says Shannon's mother, Catherine Rush.

"Because of LEAP, Shannon always knew she had a safety net under her, and this freed her to do her best."

— Catherine Rush



Shannon Rush (middle) and her mother Catherine (left) consult with LEAP director Ellen Braaten, PhD

Rushes for their annual meetings with school teachers and administrators. Shannon's mother notes that her daughter has become very disciplined in her school work with a drive to overcome her learning issues. Her progress has been impressive. "Because of LEAP, Shannon always knew she had a safety net under her, and this freed her to do her best," says Rush.

THE LOGIC STUDY

The LEAP team is engaged in a groundbreaking study to examine the origins of neuropsychological impairments, and the connection between genetic risk for neuropsychological problems and the development of conditions such as autism, ADHD, anxiety and bipolar disorder. Called LOGIC (Longitudinal Study of Genetic Influences on Cognition), the study is an ambitious research endeavor which, when completed, will be the first large-scale research project of its kind. Conducted in partnership with the MGH Center for Human Genetic Research, the study involves collecting saliva DNA samples from 3,000 LEAP patients and following these youths for at least seven years, and longer if funding allows.

NEED FOR RESOURCES

LEAP was started three years ago by the Department of Psychiatry with private philanthropic funds. Although a new program, the number of requests from parents seeking evaluations for their children already exceeds LEAP's clinical capacity. Braaten and her colleagues are eager to secure new resources and to create more postgraduate training positions in neuropsychological assessment. "We must do more," says Braaten. "Understanding a child's needs and getting him or her on the right path early can be transforming."



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WAYS TO GIVE

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Sang Foundation Sponsors Pediatric Bipolar Conference

*Venture Philanthropy and the
Quest For The Test™*

About a year after their only child passed away from complications related to bipolar disorder, Chicago couple Joyce and Dusty Sang were on an airplane. “Our flight attendant was wearing pins for various illnesses on his apron,” recalls Dusty, “so I handed him one of The Ryan



Joyce and Dusty Sang

Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation’s awareness pins and told him about our son, Ryan, who passed away in 2004 at the age of 24 from this insidious illness.” The pin was designed by Joyce in the shape of a black-and-white striped ribbon to represent the opposite poles of depression and mania associated with bipolar disorder.

“Clutching the pin, the flight attendant knelt down close to me and his hands began to shake,” recalls Dusty. “With tears in his eyes, he poured out his story of living with a mother who had bipolar disorder. We see over and over again the power of awareness: not only of a symbol like the foundation’s pin, but also of the safety that comes with being part of a community that understands. This safety unlocks stories that have been hidden away, sometimes for a lifetime.”

Since the founding of The Ryan Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation in the fall of 2004, Joyce and Dusty Sang have been on a quest “to change the course of early-onset bipolar disorder so that other families do not have to be us,” says Joyce Sang, president of the foundation. “Everything

the foundation does is dedicated to the twin goals of catalyzing research that will achieve an empirical, biomarker test for bipolar disorder – the *Quest for the Test™* – and promoting awareness, education and understanding.”

ANNUAL PEDIATRIC BIPOLAR DISORDER CONFERENCE

In March 2011, the foundation sponsored the MGH/Ryan Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation *Pediatric Bipolar Disorder Conference* in Boston for the fourth consecutive year. Previously, the annual conference was sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health. “When government funding ended, the Sangs literally

The bipolar awareness ribbon, designed by Joyce Sang, is the symbol for The Ryan Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation. The black and white colors represent the opposite poles of depression and mania associated with bipolar disorder.



saved the day, allowing the conference to continue annually as a vital forum for communication among researchers who are working in this critical area of research,” says Joseph Biederman, MD, director of the MGH Clinical and Research Program in Pediatric Psychopharmacology and Adult ADHD.

More than 100 researchers and other health care professionals attended the March 2011 conference. Participants came from throughout the United States as well as from Spain, Italy, the UK, Brussels, Colombia and Israel to share research and arrange future collaborations across multinational and multi-university platforms. “I have been attending the conference for the past four years,” reports Aditya Narain Sharma, MD, senior lecturer in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Newcastle University in the UK, “and I believe that the conference’s unique networking and collaboration opportunities will move us a step closer to solving the puzzle of bipolar disorder.”

“We see over and over again the power of awareness: not only of a symbol like the foundation’s pin, but also of the safety that comes with being part of a community that understands.”

— Dusty Sang

By supporting the annual Mass General conference, where scientists and researchers can leverage their knowledge and ideas, the Sangs hope to catalyze progress toward the foundation’s quest to discover a biomarker test for bipolar disorder. This, combined with the foundation’s support of pilot novel scientific investigations, represents a new wave of venture philanthropy that is now the frontline of early funding in the field of bipolar disorder as government funding becomes less available.

PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD BIPOLAR DISORDER

When Ryan was young, diagnoses of early-onset bipolar disorder were relatively rare, according to Janet Wozniak, MD, director of the MGH Pediatric Bipolar Disorder Clinical and Research Program and associate professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Wozniak and her colleagues were the first in the world to publish research suggesting that early-onset bipolar disorder was far more common than anyone had thought: They found that the disorder appeared in 16 percent of children under age 12 who were referred to the MGH program. A subsequent study of a non-psychiatrically referred population (Merikangas, et al: 2010) found bipolar disorder in 2.9 percent of more than 10,000 randomly selected adolescents throughout the United States.

The 2.9 percent figure is almost three times the prevalence of childhood autism (1 percent) and is comparable to the prevalence of bipolar disorder in adults (2.6 percent). “Until our research began to suggest that early-onset bipolar disorder was a common reason for psychiatric referral among children, it was not even taught in psychiatry residency programs,” says Wozniak. “When we met the Sangs and heard about Ryan’s

story, we realized that he represented so much of what we were learning about this disorder in children.”

IN RYAN’S MEMORY

“Ryan was a charismatic, creative, intelligent child with a wonderful smile that drew you in,” says Joyce. “When his symptoms started at age 5 and progressed as he grew older, no one could tell us what was wrong.” Ryan’s mood swings and fears grew more intense as he became a teenager, and he was hospitalized twice. With the help of medications, his condition seemed to go into remission by his early twenties. He was working in the family business, finishing a novel, writing music, and he became engaged to be married. “What we didn’t know is that he was feeling so well that he stopped taking his medication, which is a common occurrence among people with bipolar disorder,” says Joyce. “He was like a computer without a surge protector; he hadn’t slept in days, he entered a manic episode, and in order to sleep, he turned to a street drug, which tragically proved deadly for him.”

Remembering back to when they lost their son, Joyce says, “We could have just stayed home in grief and never come out, but instead we decided to do what we could to help other families not be us.” Adds Dusty, “When you lose a child, it is not like having the flu. You are not supposed to recover. The hole in your heart never heals. We hope that what we are doing will make a difference for those children and their families who struggle everyday with this insidious illness.”

SAVE THE DATES

*The MGH Psychiatry Academy
Patient and Family Education Seminars*

**Current Issues in Youth Sports:
Raising Healthy Children in a
Competitive World**

Saturday, September 10, 2011

**9th Annual
Schizophrenia Education Day**

Saturday, November 5, 2011

Starr Center
Massachusetts General Hospital

Information: www.moodandanxiety.org
(617) 724-8318

*Sponsored by the
Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Foundation*

MGH Psychiatry, Out and About



Memorial Day Half Marathon

Above, Pediatric Psychopharmacology Program Council members David Bernstein, MD, left, and Samantha Bernstein at the finish line. For the second year in a row, David raised funds for the as a runner.



Bressler Program Annual Dinner

Above left: Alan and Lorraine Bressler, benefactors of the Alan and Lorraine Bressler Clinical and Research Program for Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Pediatric Psychopharmacology Program; Right: Program Council members Helen Charlupski, left, and Norma Fine



MGH Endowment for the Advancement of Psychotherapy Leadership Award

Above, from left: Anya Epstein, writer/producer of the HBO series *In Treatment* and recipient of the Leadership Award for the Advancement of Mental Health with Kathleen Ulman, PhD, Group Therapy Program director and Endowment board member



Above, from left, Aude Henin, PhD, director of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Bressler Program; Marianne Pawlicki, Council member; and Bryan Reimer, PhD, associate director, The New England University Transportation Center at MIT



Above, from left, Joan Sapir, MGH senior vice president; Gagan Joshi, MD, medical director, Bressler Program; Janet Wozniak, MD, associate director, Bressler Program; and Ted Sullivan, Council member



MGH Faculty and Staff Visit Liberia

Above, from left: David C. Henderson, MD, director of the Chester M. Pierce Global Psychiatry Division, meeting President of Liberia, Dr. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, to discuss the proposed psychiatry center of excellence
Right, from left: Gregory L. Fricchione, MD, associate chief of MGH Psychiatry; John Herman, MD, associate chief of MGH Psychiatry; and Dr. Henderson with Vuyu Golakai, MD, dean of the Medical School, University of Liberia

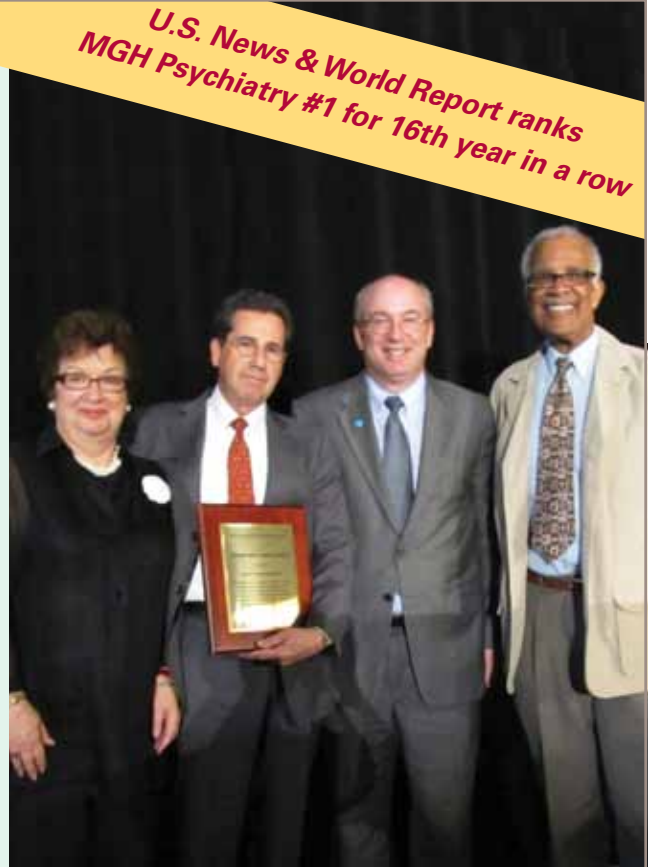


**U.S. News & World Report ranks
MGH Psychiatry #1 for 16th year in a row**



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Research Program Dinner

Above left: Charlotte Kaitz, left, and daughter, Sharon Kaitz Wilson
 Above right: Annie C. Keegan, left, with Sabine Wilhelm, PhD, director of the OCD and Related Disorders Program
 Below, from left: Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD, chief of MGH Psychiatry; Michael A. Jenike, MD, founder of the OCD and Related Disorders Program; hosts David and Michele Mittelman; Daniel Geller, MD, director of the Pediatric OCD Program; and Jordan Smoller, MD, director of the Psychiatric Genetics Program



Massachusetts Association of Mental Health (MAMH) Award Dinner

Above, from left: Thaleia Tsongas Schlesinger, president, MAMH Board of Directors; MAMH 2011 Friend and Leader Awardee Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD, chief of MGH Psychiatry; Peter L. Slavin, MD, president of Massachusetts General Hospital; and Chester M. Pierce, MD, senior psychiatrist emeritus, MGH Psychiatry, and founder of the Global Psychiatry Division at Mass General, named in his honor



**8th Annual Dinner and Meeting
Depression Program Council**

Above, from left: Guest speaker Bob Arnot, MD, former chief medical editor, NBC News, and chief foreign correspondent, MSNBC; with Maurizio Fava, MD, executive vice chair of MGH Psychiatry and director, MGH Depression Clinical and Research Program; and Richard Segerson, member, MGH Leadership Council for Psychiatry



Flawless Foundation, Perfection Party

Above, from left: Honoree Harold S. Koplewicz, MD, founder of the Child Mind Institute; honorary co-chair Patrick Kennedy; honoree J. Stuart Ablon, PhD, director of the MGHThink:Kids Program; honoree Shonda Schilling, author of *The Best Kind of Different: Our Family's Journey with Asperger's Syndrome*; honoree Garen Staglin, co-founder with Congressman Patrick Kennedy of The Next Frontier of the Brain campaign; Janine Francolini, executive director of the Flawless Foundation; and Karennia Gore Schiff, presenter



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Faculty News

Anne E. Becker, MD, PhD, ScM, director of the MGH Eating Disorders Clinical and Research Program, was elected president of the Academy for Eating Disorders. Dr. Becker was also named incumbent of the Maude and Lillian Presley Professorship of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Randy L. Buckner, PhD, director of Psychiatric Neuroimaging Research, was honored with the 25th Annual MetLife Foundation Award for Medical Research in Alzheimer's disease.

Thilo Deckersbach, PhD, director of Psychology in the Bipolar Clinic and Research Program, won a 2011 Travel Award from the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.



Astrid Desrosiers, MD, MPH, staff psychiatrist in the Bipolar Clinic and Research Program, won a Compassionate Caregiver award from the Kenneth B. Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare as a member of the Haitian Mental Health Team of Cambridge Health Alliance.

John F. Kelly, PhD, program director of the Addiction Recovery Management Service (ARMS) and associate director of the Center for Addiction Medicine, received a gift from the Tower Family Fund to increase awareness of addiction as a chronic illness and inform addiction treatment guidelines and public policy.

Paula K. Rauch, MD, founding director of the Marjorie E. Korff PACT (Parenting at a Challenging Time) Program and chief of the Child Psychiatry Consultation Service to Pediatrics, received the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's annual Simon Wile Leadership Consultation Award.

Hannah E. Reese, PhD, clinical and research fellow in Psychiatry, received a grant from the Tourette Syndrome Association to mount a pilot study of mindfulness-based stress reduction for Tourette syndrome and chronic tic disorder.

Helen Riess, MD, and John M. Kelley, PhD, of the Empathy and Relational Science Program, were awarded grants from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation for Humanism in Medicine. Dr. Kelley will study relationship factors affecting healthcare outcomes. Dr. Riess will study empathy and relational skills training in resident physicians.

Eugene Taylor, PhD, Department of Psychiatry historian and senior psychologist, has been elected a Fellow in the Society for Humanistic Psychology, a division of the American Psychological Association (APA), and will receive the Abraham Maslow Award for lifetime contributions.

Jennifer J. Thomas, PhD, assistant director of the Eating Disorders Clinical and Research Program and **Kamryn T. Eddy, PhD**, staff psychologist in child psychiatry, were awarded a grant by the Hilda and Preston Davis Foundation to evaluate newly proposed diagnostic criteria for eating disorders.

George E. Vaillant, MD, director emeritus of the world's longest running study of adult development, now directed by Robert Waldinger, MD (below), received the 2011 Smithers Award from the American Society of Addiction Medicine and the 2011 Gold Key Award from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.



Robert J. Waldinger, MD, director of the Center for Psychodynamic Therapy and Research and director of the Laboratory for Adult Development, received the 2011 Outstanding Psychiatrist Award for Clinical Research from the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society.

Sabine Wilhelm, PhD, director of the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Program and director of the Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders Program, and **Steven A. Safren, PhD**, director of the Behavioral Medicine Service, will accept the 2011 Outstanding Training Program Award from the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.