Message from the Department Head

Dr. Valerie Taylor

Thank you everyone for everything you have done during 2020. As we look in to 2021, I think many of us are hoping to finally see a little stability start to occur. Our Department has been very resilient as we adapt to working from home, virtual care, COVID protocols, staffing changes and adapting to increased volumes and challenging resources. Our goal as a Department is to focus on ensuring you continue to be updated and informed, and to be a source of accurate information. With the support of Dr. Hashman and the Site Leads, we are now producing a monthly newsletter in addition to our quarterly updates, so we can share across all sites the activities occurring at each hospital, as well challenges and successes. This way we ensure that we are at least all informed of everything that is occurring. We also need to share successes and I think this is a good way to do it – there are a lot of great things happening and we are doing great work with our clinical initiatives and nimbleness. Our academic impact continues to grow as well, as we continue to recruit excellent academic colleagues to Calgary.

Stay safe everyone.

Best,
Valerie
just wanted to thank you all for your support. The run was a great success and raised nearly $200,000! We also had almost the same number of participants as previous years. Pretty good for a global pandemic and economic downturn with oil prices!

Lisa Gagnon
Psychiatrist
Quality Assurance
Perinatal Mental Health Network Chair

Mental Health Clinical Trials Unit (MHCTU)
Thomas J Raedler, MD
Medical Director, Mental Health Clinical Trials Unit (MHCTU)

The Mental Health Clinical Trials Unit (MHCTU) continues to pursue the goal of finding new and better pharmacological and interventional treatments for psychiatric disorders. Our current clinical trials cover the areas of schizophrenia, attenuated psychosis syndrome (prodromal psychosis) and ADHD. Participating in clinical trials offers participants the opportunity of receiving treatment with novel pharmaceutical compounds that are not yet commercially available as well as frequent assessments and oversight of care. Please be aware that many participants experience an improvement in their symptoms while participating in a clinical trial. We continue to rely on your ongoing support for our clinical trials.

Like many other programs, our activities were significantly impacted by COVID-19. All clinical trials were closed for further recruitment. We were able to use online assessments for subjects who were already enrolled in our trials. We are slowly starting to re-open our clinical trials to recruitment and screening and resume activities in keeping with the COVID-19 safety parameters.

The MHCTU is currently participating in the following clinical trials:

**BI Cognition Study in Schizophrenia 1346-0038 (NCT03859973):**
BI 425809 is an orally administered glycine transporter-1 inhibitor. This phase II clinical trial assesses whether treatment with this compound, in combination with regular computerized cognitive training, helps to improve cognition in schizophrenia.

**Real World Evidence of the Efficacy and Safety of FOQUEST (reFOQus) (NCT04152629):**
This Phase IV open-label clinical trial compares the efficacy and safety of methylphenidate (Foquest) and lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse) in children.
adolescents and adults with ADHD. Dr. Ortega serves as Principal Investigator and Dr. Binder and Dr. Chang are Co-Investigators.

**NaBen Studies:**
NaBen (sodium benzoate) is already approved as a food additive (E211). This compound is being tested in clinical trials as it is thought to improve the function of the NMDA-receptor. Previous studies have shown excellent efficacy and safety for NaBen in improving symptoms of schizophrenia.

**The NaBen Adolescent Schizophrenia Study** (Adaptive Phase II Study to Evaluate the Safety & Efficacy of Sodium Benzoate as an Add-on Treatment for Schizophrenia in Adolescents; NCT01908192) assesses the effects of sodium benzoate as an add-on medication to ongoing antipsychotic treatment on symptoms of schizophrenia in adolescents with schizophrenia between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

**The NaBen Adult Schizophrenia Study** (Study to Evaluate Safety & Efficacy of NaBen® as Add-on Treatment for Schizophrenia in Adults; NCT02261519) assesses the effects of add-on treatment with sodium benzoate in adults with schizophrenia, who continue to struggle with psychotic symptoms despite ongoing antipsychotic treatment.

The NaBen Clozapine study (An Adaptive Phase II/III, Two-Part, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-controlled, Dose-Finding, Multi-center Study of the Safety and Efficacy of NaBen®, as an Add-on Therapy With Clozapine, for Residual Symptoms of Refractory Schizophrenia in Adults; NCT03094429) assesses sodium benzoate as add-on treatment in subjects who failed to experience sufficient benefits from treatment with clozapine.

**BI409306 Studies:**
BI409306 is a novel PDE9-Inhibitor (Phosphodiesterase–9 Inhibitor). This compound increases concentrations of second messenger in neurons. While interacting with the glutamatergic system, this compound is also thought to improve synaptic plasticity. In a previous clinical trial that we also participated in, this compound was very well tolerated but failed to show significant improvement in the area of cognitive impairment associated with schizophrenia (CIAS).

**The BI relapse prevention Study** (A phase II randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to evaluate the efficacy, safety, and tolerability of orally administered BI 409306 during a 28-week treatment period as adjunctive therapy to antipsychotic treatment for the prevention of relapse in patients with schizophrenia; NCT03351244) assesses if the addition of BI 409306 to ongoing antipsychotic treatment helps to prevent relapses in adults with schizophrenia. This clinical trial was recently terminated by the sponsor.

**The BI Attenuated Psychosis Syndrome Study** (A phase II randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to evaluate the efficacy, safety, and tolerability of orally administered BI 409306 during a 52-week treatment period as an early intervention in patients with attenuated psychosis syndrome; NCT03230097) assesses if BI 409306 can prevent subjects, who are at high risk of developing psychosis, from becoming worse.
We continue to rely on your support for our clinical trials program. You can obtain additional information on our current studies by accessing our web-site. Please feel free to contact myself (Thomas.raedler@ahs.ca), Geri Anderson (phone 403.210.6903 or email Geri.Anderson@ahs.ca) or Jeff Cheng (phone 403.210.8679 or email cfj.cheng@ucalgary.ca) if you wish to have more information about one of these studies, or if you wish to refer a patient for possible participation.

The Child and Adolescent Addiction, Mental Health and Psychiatry Program (CAAMHPP)

Jennifer Kuntz MSW, RSW
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) & Trauma Informed Care (TIC) Project Facilitator
Child and Adolescent Addiction, Mental Health & Psychiatry Program CAAMHPP – Calgary Zone

The Child and Adolescent Addiction, Mental Health and Psychiatry Program (CAAMHPP) is advancing the Adverse Childhood Experiences ACE/Trauma Informed Care TIC into phase II focusing on Resilience. This phase of the initiative aligns with larger system priorities including the CAAMHPP Strategic Plan 2016-2021, the Addiction and Mental Health Review, Alberta Health Services Trauma Informed Care Project, research on the impact of toxic stress on the developing brain and the science of resilience.

Our mission is to provide world class mental health and addiction services from a trauma responsive lens that optimizes the health and well-being of children, youth and their families. Our goal is to expand on the foundational work completed in phase I, in the area of clinical practice, service delivery and translational research & evaluation. In phase I, we successfully implemented the systematic collection and documentation of ACE scores for all clients resulting in over 10,000 scores being collected over the past 5 years. The data has shown a stable distribution of ACE scores over the last 5 year period revealing that 1/3rd of CAAMHPP clients have an ACE score of 4 or higher and 1/10th of CAAMHPP clients having an ACE score between 7-10.

For more information on this initiative please feel free to connect with Jennifer Kuntz, Resilience 2.0 Initiative Project Facilitator @ Jennifer.Kuntz@ahs.ca.
As trauma and adversity continue to impact a large majority of CAAMHPP clients, we have committed to phase II, Resilience 2.0, focusing on the following areas:

- bolstering client/family resilience through skill development/external supports, decreasing the burden of adversity and increase protective factors;
- intervening early to change the trajectory of ACE/trauma accumulation in early childhood;
- evaluating trauma interventions to see what works, with who and when (frequency, intensity, dosing, timing);
- creating, evaluating and scaling up clinical pathways and interventions for this population and;
- continuing knowledge translation and staff professional development to build overall trauma competence and;
- strengthening our partnerships within Addiction & Mental Health as well as with other organizations/agencies who are also engaged in this work.

A&MH Trauma Advisory Committee Update

Jennifer Kuntz & Dr. Diana Czechowsky - Co-Chairs Trauma Advisory Committee

As we work towards becoming a trauma informed organization, the A&MH Trauma Advisory Committee has expanded to include members from across the entire portfolio including child and adolescent through to geriatric mental health and addiction. The work is focused around the following three goals:
The committee is developing educational & training opportunities as well as resources for all A&MH staff to meet these goals. As a starting point, the committee recommends that all A&MH staff watch the Trauma Informed Care Module available on My Learning Link, to strengthen the collective trauma literacy across all A&MH staff (admin, clinical, leadership).

The committee is also exploring various training/educational opportunities to increase trauma competency across A&MH including trauma focused intervention.

The Trauma Advisory Committee will provide updates regarding these opportunities in the upcoming months.
Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Program
Dr. Tim Ayas MD FRCPC CCFP MPH BSc
Clinical Assistant Professor, U of C
Section Chief Community, Addictions, & Rural South
Clerkship Director, Department of Psychiatry, U of C, UME

It’s been an exciting and tumultuous year to say the least. With the onset of the pandemic, I know many students in the Class of 2021 were concerned they may not be able to complete on time to start their careers. Thanks to the hard work of the Assistant Dean Dr. Kevin Busche, the hard working staff at the office of the UME, and all the psychiatry clerkship staff including Dr. Nancy Brager, Clerkship Site Directors, site administrators, residents, and preceptors these clerks will finish on time to start their respective residencies in July. A number of adjustments to clerkship had to be conducted to achieve this potential goal: utilization of the time off clinical work at the onset of the pandemic to complete all the academic commitments from each Department (usually reserved for academic half days longitudinally), re-routing of medical students from outbreak sites (at times with little notice), and acceptance of a shortened rotation by many faculties. The students truly appreciate the efforts made, and I want to send a sincere thank you to all of you who have assisted in this process. Your flexibility to the adaptations to the logistical manner we deliver clerkship is noted and appreciated. Please consider attending our annual virtual retreat on November 6th, 2020 to learn more about how you can be more involved in this robust clerkship program.

Post Graduate Medical Education
Dr. Greg Montgomery/Pauline Burgess

Even with all the challenges over the last seven months, the residency program has continued to operate amazingly well in no small part due to the tenacity of our residents and faculty to provide the best possible experience amidst tumultuous circumstances.

As many of you are aware, RCPSC postponed certifying exams for the final year residents from the spring, re-instituting them in the summer. As of October 1, we are happy to report that all 10 examinees received the good news of their success. Our congratulations to Suzanne Black, Mark Colijn, Andrew Dutcher, Darby Ewashina, Erin Girard, Beata Komierowski, Patricia Maron, Sara Meunier, Ashley Pauls and Aleena Shariff.

Psychiatry across Canada launched Competency by Design (CBD) in July 2020.
For our program, we created eight – 2 week blocks of placements in areas that would allow PGY-1s to achieve objective for the Entrustable Professional Acts (EPAs) focusing on the basic skills of obtaining a psychiatric history and communicating clinical encounters. With a big thanks to Inpatients across all adult sites, Psychiatry Emergency at FMC, RGH and the CSU, all of our PGY-1s were successful in completing the first stage of CBD known as Transition to Discipline (TTD).

In terms of infrastructure for CPD, Dr. Selmer recruited Dr. Crockford to chair the Competence Committee, consisting of Drs. Beck, Birkett, deGroot, Mohan, Ortega and Raiche. Members provided a review of each PGY-1s Workplace Based Assessments (WBAs) that lead to meeting the requirements of the two EPAs. The second “team” in CBD is the group of academic advisors who meet regularly with their designated resident to review progress in achieving EPAs as they move through training. This is a vital and welcomed addition that supports the residents on a one-to-one basis. We welcome and thank the following eight staff who have taken on this role; Drs. Finkbeiner, Jalali, Mackie, McLane, Ratti, Scott, Tan and Weatherbee.

To address the lost time in the early stages of the pandemic, in preparing for the certifying STACERs, we are happy to report that Dr. Philip Stokes will join Dr. Ursula Hines in working with our PGY-4s starting in January. This ongoing support in honing the interview skills over the last decade have been extremely invaluable and we truly appreciate all the work Dr. Hines and formerly Dr. Fawcett have devoted to this effort.

In order to provide residents with a broader understanding of cultural psychiatry and its implications on patient care, this fall, all PGY-2-5s have completed a half-day workshop created and hosted by Dr. Rachel Grimminck and PGY-4 Dr. Harry Zhou. This was an extensive undertaking and we want to thank them for all the behind the scenes work that these workshops entailed.

Nationally, CaRMS interviews will be held virtually March 8-28, 2021. In order to provide applicants with opportunities to interact and learn about our program, the residents created an excellent video highlighting the program: a link can be found on the department website. In addition, residents are hosting at least 4 different Zoom sessions for interested students across Canada to “meet” residents and ask questions. A very big thanks to Taka Hoy, Hilary Aadland and Jian Choo for the work in creating the video, as well as organizing the town hall sessions.

As you can surmise, the residency program has not been slowed down by the pandemic. There were resident redeployments but all changes to affected residents did not hamper meeting core training requirements. A big thank you to all who had to pivot in order to make the changes work; resourcefulness is truly a valuable quality!
The multi-disciplinary departmental CPD committee oversees all CPD-activities through our department. We meet on the second Monday of each month for one hour. We are always looking for new members for our committee. Please let us know if you are interested in joining our team.

The last months were unprecedented due to the sudden surge of COVID-19, which resulted in an abrupt end to all face-to-face activities in mid-March. Thanks to the efforts of the members of our department, we were able to continue most of our CPD-activities, albeit in a very different way. A special thank you goes to Anne Enders, who quickly familiarized herself with Zoom and who has been coordinating all our online activities. Still, we are looking forward to the time when we will be able to resume our regular Grand Rounds in G500.

The Spring 2020 Grand Rounds semester finished on June 23, 2020. As with most events, COVID-19 disrupted our schedule. We were able to adapt quickly and switched our schedule to presentations with a focus on COVID-19. We also switched our Grand Rounds presentations to Zoom, which worked out surprisingly well. Thank you to those who volunteered on such short notice to ensure Grand Rounds continued. Thanks to everyone’s efforts, we only had to cancel five Grand Rounds presentations.

For the Spring 2020 Grand Rounds semester we awarded a total of 452 CME credits to 81 participating physicians. The CME-certificates for the Spring 2020 Grand Rounds semester were sent out on July 14, 2020 to all physicians who completed the weekly online survey. Please let Anne know if you did not receive your CME-certificate.

The Fall 2020 Grand Rounds semester started on September 8th with a beautiful tribute honouring Dr. Glenda MacQueen. At this time, all Fall 2020 Grand Rounds are scheduled to continue via Zoom only. The zoom link will be included in our weekly Grand Rounds email reminder.

The ‘Psychiatry Quarterly Updates (PQU)’ are three-hour sessions that focus on a specific topic. Physicians can earn up to 3.75 Section 3 CME-credits. The next PQU-sessions are scheduled for September 25, 2020 (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) and December 4, 2020 (Neuropsychiatry). Registration is through the Office of Continuing Medical Education and Professional Development of the Cumming School of Medicine. We always welcome suggestions of topics.

Dr. Thomas Raedler chaired the 2020 Psychiatry Online Literature Review Course (POLRC). POLRC covered 12 journal articles with a focus on ‘Highlights of 2019’ and took place from February 24, 2020 until June 30, 2020. The POLRC offers the option of obtaining up 38.0 MOC Section 1 and 3.0
MOC Section 3 Self-Assessment hours from the convenience of home. This year we had 45 participants.

Please notify Anne Enders at margaret.enders@ucalgary.ca if you are not receiving our weekly email updates. For physicians, please let Anne Enders know if you are not receiving the weekly online surveys (your CME-credits will be based on the completion of this online survey). Thank you again for your ongoing support of our CPD-activities.

Mathison Centre Updates
Dr. Paul Arnold/ Josephine Adda

Mathison Centre researchers take school based mental health research a notch further

**Coping at school during the pandemic** - Dr. Kelly Schwartz, member of the Mathison Centre and Associate Professor at the Werklund School of Education is leading a research study to gauge the mental health of school-aged children as they return to school in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The all Mathison-Centre team includes Drs. Carly McMorris, Paul Arnold, Erica Makarenko and Deinera Exner-Cortens.

The yearlong study begun on September 8 with a survey underway to 3000 children in grades 6-12 in Calgary and Edmonton. The survey asks students questions about how they are coping with the pandemic and how it affects their overall school experience and learning.

This innovative study will capture in real-time the experiences of children as they live through unprecedented circumstances created by the pandemic. Students from four metro school divisions: the Calgary Board of Education, the Calgary Catholic School District, the Edmonton Public Schools, and the Edmonton Catholic Schools will offer a representative research cohort that will identify self-reported psychological, behavioural, and learning needs of students. The research team and school administrators
hope that findings from the study will help schools across Canada in developing programming that is responsive to the mental health and learning needs of students.

Mental health literacy resource for use in schools - A collaboration between the Mathison Centre and Teen Mental Health has led to the development of a set of four curriculum-based resources comprising brochures and accompanying videos for helping teachers and students at the elementary, junior high and senior high levels to understand mental health in general and specifically stress. This targeted initiative was in partnership with the Calgary Board of Education, the Calgary Catholic School District, the Edmonton Public Schools, and the Edmonton Catholic Schools. The four curriculum-based resources focus on Mental Health Literacy and Stress for Senior High, Junior High and Elementary students.

School-Based Suicide Risk Assessment Using eHealth - Principal Investigator Dr. Deinera is leading a study to understand the use of eHealth tools in assessing suicide risk in school environments. The team is collaborating with the Rocky View Schools and Child and Adolescent Addiction, Mental Health and Psychiatry Program (CAAMHPP) of the Alberta Health Services. Together with Mathison Centre member co-investigators Drs. Paul Arnold and Kelly Schwartz, the team are embarking on a scoping review to understand the lay of the land and equip school mental health professionals in addressing suicide risk working within the inherent limitations of eHealth platforms.

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on youth mental health
Researchers and Child and Adolescent psychiatrists Drs. Paul Arnold and Iliana
Ortega have embarked on a study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of pediatric patients in Calgary receiving specialized services for mood disorders, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders associated with streptococcal infections. The observational longitudinal study involves collecting demographic information and outcome measures at different times (baseline, 3-month, 6-month, 9-month, and 1 year) to track the trajectory of mental health of patients over the pandemic period. Early clinical observations of pediatric patients has revealed that despite initial concerns that the mental health of pediatric patients with OCD and PANDAS/PANS was going to deteriorate due to the pandemic, in fact symptoms in most of these patients have not worsened. Also, there are indications that patients are benefiting from decreased level of stress from being home schooled or spending more time at home which seem to have led to decreased expectations for social interaction. The study will provide in-depth understanding into how different kids respond differently to the same situation.

Awards and Achievements

Dr. Z. Ismail
- Was elected as Academic Lead for the International Society to Advance Alzheimer’s Research and Treatment (ISTAART) Neuropsychiatric Symptoms Professional Interest Area for a 2-year term
- Author on the new International Psychogeriatric Association Consensus Clinical and Research Criteria for Psychosis in Major and Mild Neurocognitive Disorders

Dr. D. Kopala-Sibley
- NSERC Discovery Grant
- CIHR Early Career Investigator Operating Grant in Maternal, Reproductive, Child, and Youth Health
- Canadian Psychology Association President’s New Researcher Award.
- Society for Biological Psychiatry Early Career Travel Fellowship

Dr. A. McGirr
- Society of Biological Psychiatry Travel Fellowship Award 2020

Dr. S. Patten
- The Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS) has recognized Dr. Patten for his dedication to health sciences

Dr. J. Addington
- Elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada
Dr. F. MacMaster’s students
- Cynthia Kahl defended her PhD (Neuroscience) and has now started her MD training at the University of Calgary
- Clara Tapia (MSc Neuroscience) earned an ACHRI Graduate Scholarship award

Dr. Crockford and Dr. Bahji
- Boston University School of Medicine Research in Addiction Medicine Scholars (RAMS) Program awardees 2020-2022

Upcoming Events

Department of Psychiatry Grants
- Dr. McGirr - Modules of spontaneous cortical activity in mouse cortex during quiet wakefulness: key nodes and shaping by neuromodulators. Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) 2020-2025. $150,000 CAD

Publications


Marianne Hrabok PhD, Rita Watterson MD MPH, Giselle DeVetten MD, Alesa Wagner MD. Canadian Refugee Women Are at Increased Risk of Postpartum Depression: How Can We Help? 25 April, 2020. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jogc.2020.03.023


McGirr, A*, LeDue, J, Chan, AW, Boyd, JD, Metzak, PD, Murphy, TH. Stress impacts sensory variability through cortical sensory activity motifs. Transl Psychiatry. 2020; Jan 21; 10(1):20. IF=5.18


Montero-Odasso M, Ismail Z, Livingston G. One third of dementia cases can be prevented within the next 25 years by tackling risk factors. The case “for” and “against”. Alzheimer's Research & Therapy. 2020 Dec; 12(1):1-5.

Smith EE, Couillard P, Fisk JD, Ismail Z, Montero-Odasso, Robillard JM, Vedel I, Sivananthan S, Gauthier S, for the Alzheimer Society of Canada Task Force on Dementia
Fall 2020
Department of Psychiatry Newsletter
Calgary Zone


Mind Matters is distributed to psychiatry medical staff and faculty, psychiatry residents, program directors and section chiefs, Alberta Health Services executives, and psychiatry support staff.

Submissions & Inquiries: Nancy Colp nancy.colp@ahs.ca