

# Newsletter

## MEDICAL STUDENT



A Publication of the American Psychiatric Association

Committee on Medical Student Education

### Greetings from the Chair!

By: Linda Pessar, M.D.

I write this column as two events in my work converge: coordinating the psychiatry component of Neuroscience and Behavior, a second-year course the University at Buffalo School of Medicine, and participating with The APA Committee on Medical Student Education in selecting recipients for the APA Innovative Teaching Grants. Both endeavors made me marvel at the breadth of psychiatry and the manner in which the field has been able to accommodate and integrate its concerns with psychology and the humanistic tradition and with its medical mission and the burgeoning field of neuroscience.

As we considered major mental illnesses in the neuroscience course, we reviewed clinical syndromes, genetics, neurotransmitters, functional imaging, drug treatment, psychosocial variables,

and psychotherapy. And we used lyrics from popular music, film clips, and biographic and fictional readings to give human resonance to these illnesses. I know that many, probably most medical schools use this wide spectrum of concepts and points of view.

The APA awarded only five Innovative Teaching Grants, but there were many worthy proposals. All of us involved in selection were impressed by the creativity of many applications that reflected the breadth of interests of psychiatry that I have discussed above. Winning projects included taking medical students to visit a "living museum" of art made by patients in a state mental hospital; having medical students participate in school-based psychiatry clinics for children and adolescents; and teaching medical students to prevent and manage metabolic syndromes among the seriously

mentally ill. These three projects offer a snapshot of psychiatry: our long-standing interest in the arts as a means to understand the psyche, our traditional interest in clinical outreach, and our participation in the medical mainstream.

I am often puzzled by the percentage of medical students who select careers in psychiatry. I don't understand why it isn't 80%! Psychiatry offers possibilities for great scientific discoveries and understanding, broad intellectual perspectives, and intimate connection with patients.

I urge you to come to the Annual PsychSIGN and APA Meetings and discover this breadth for yourself.

*Dr. Pessar is a psychiatry faculty at the University at Buffalo*

### Ten Reasons to Attend the 2008 APA Meeting in Washington, DC

The APA Annual Meeting is the biggest psychiatry gathering of the year. This global forum brings together thousands of psychiatry professionals to share groundbreaking research and participate in a comprehensive educational program.

1. As a medical student, your registration is free.
2. Attend the PsychSIGN meeting.
3. Reconnect, network and socialize with more than 18,000 psychiatrists and trainees from around the world.
4. Choose from hundreds of educational sessions.
5. Special events such as "MindGames" and a major social event, the All Alumni Reception.

6. National Institute of Mental Health research track and sub-specialty sessions.
7. State of the art Exhibit Hall and Publishers Book Fair.
8. Take home a DVD-ROM of top sessions.
9. Enjoy Washington DC, known for its parks, restaurants, shopping and memorials.
10. Visit free and acclaimed Smithsonian museums, National History, Air, Space, and the National Gallery of Art.

Here are just some of the activities and sessions you can attend at the meeting:

#### Sunday, May 4

"How to Survive the Annual Meeting" Orientation for Medical Students and Residents; 10:00 am – 11:30 am at the Congressional Hall C, Ballroom Level, Renaissance

Award Luncheon for Educators, Medical Students & Residents; 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm at the Renaissance



*(Continued on page 4)*

**Psychiatrist Profile—Dr. Carol Tamminga****The Science of Medicine****By: Joanna Chaurette**

**D**r. Carol Tamminga is Professor of Psychiatry, Chief of Translational Neuroscience Research, and Chair in Brain Science at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. She has published 300 papers and two books, and she lectures internationally on the topic of schizophrenia. Dr. Tamminga is the co-founder of the International Conference of Schizophrenia Research and Deputy Editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry. Dr. Tamminga is a phenomenal role model, and as a medical student about to embark on my own PhD, speaking with her was an inspiration.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Tamminga over the phone, and despite the fact that I was sitting halfway across the country, her words were electric and instantly engaging. Her enthusiasm for research is infectious to say the least, and her contributions to medicine, research, and the academic community are tremendous.

Dr. Tamminga had always known that she wanted to pursue medicine as a career, and science interested her from a young age. During college, her participation in neuropharmacology research exposed her to unanswered questions regarding the way the brain functions. In medical school, she was drawn to the cellular level of each disease process, intrigued by their mechanistic basis. Academic medicine was her goal from the start, and she chose a residency in psychiatry in order to pursue translational research and perform clinical trials.

When asked why she chose schizophrenia as an area of research, Dr. Tamminga replied, “I was a philosophy major in college, and was interested in the question of how the brain performs complex processes like reason and logic”. In working with patients with schizophrenia, she was amazed by the severity and range of presentations and how each person “loses selective capacities”. By

understanding the reasons that patients with schizophrenia are unable to use logic would give insight to the molecular basis of higher thought processes. Dr. Tamminga’s background in clinical medicine allows her to bring a different viewpoint to basic science research groups by considering humanistic aspects of disease pathogenesis.

Dr. Tamminga describes a career in research as the “most interesting thing in life to do”. She loves being able to work in an educational institution with “bright, creative peers working together,” where she can devote her time to research as well as teaching and mentoring students. One drawback of having a career in research is that it is a big responsibility to set up a laboratory that you support yourself with grants and contracts. “As the head of a lab you are constantly on the line for bringing money to your institution. But it is fun and intellectually rewarding.”

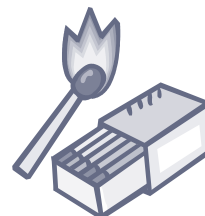
Dr. Tamminga has observed young researchers struggle with the inconsistencies of funding and the slow pace of discovery. She finds that “the biggest mistake students make is that they give up when things are difficult.” When asked how she copes with challenges, Dr. Tamminga is “driven by the intellectual challenge of contributing knowledge to the understanding of brain function, specifically how it underlies the behavior and pathology, that is seen in schizophrenia.” She encourages people, especially women, to seek out help with household chores and responsibilities in order to keep up with the demands of a high-level research career. After all, if you’re going to spend your time leading International Conferences you don’t always have time to vacuum under the couch!

Her advice for medical students considering a career in research is, “Go for it! It is the most exciting career that anyone could choose!” She refers to the brain as “the last frontier of the body”



and believes that breakthroughs in understanding the molecular basis of brain diseases are inevitable in the near future. This is a great time to join the exciting field of brain research, one that is rich with opportunities.

*Joanna Chaurette,  
Co-Leader, Psychiatry Interest Group  
MD/PhD Program, UMass Medical  
School*

**Match in Psychiatry?**

Did you match in Psychiatry? Let us know and we’ll send you a free gift!

Send your name, current medical school, residency program where you matched and your mailing address by email at [education@psych.org](mailto:education@psych.org).

*Interested in submitting articles for this newsletter, contact Nancy Delanoche at [ndelanoche@psych.org](mailto:ndelanoche@psych.org) about submission guidelines and deadlines.*

## PsychSIGN Leadership Update

In May 2007, the new leadership of PsychSIGN took over from the graduating seniors (many thanks to them for all of their hard work last year!) We met for the first time at PsychSIGN's annual national conference, held this year in San Diego in conjunction with the APA meeting. The San Diego conference was a success, with over 100 students from medical schools across the nation in attendance. Speakers included Darrel Regier, MD MPH on the development of the DSM, Thomas Anders, MD on Child Psychiatry, and Glen Gabbard, MD on psychotherapy. Students also participated in small group sessions on a wide variety of topics, including the ethics of the pharmaceutical industry, disaster psychiatry, homelessness, and alternative medicine. Last but not least, we students took advantage of the opportunity to meet other students, residents and attending psychiatrists, and many of us have kept in touch since.

Since May, this year's 7 regional chairs have kept busy recruiting members, helping to set up new PsychSIGN chapters, and planning regional conferences. Where possible, regional conferences were held in conjunction with larger meetings; conferences in the works include Region 1, at AACAP\* (Boston, October 07), Region 2, at APSA\*\* (New York, January 08) and Region 5, at IPS\*\*\* (New Orleans, October 07). Upcoming meetings include:

- Region 6 – Will be held on Saturday February 23rd, 2008 at UCLA - Center of Health Sciences (CHS)
- Region 5—Saturday, March 15, 2008 at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, LA
- Region 4—March 18-19, 2008 in Ann Arbor, MI, in conjunction with the University of Michigan Depression Center's "Depression on College Campuses" Conference.

\*\* Contact the regional chairs if you wish to attend.

Finally, Region 1 Chair Justin Chen has created a new website: check it out at [www.psychsign.org](http://www.psychsign.org). There are many resources for medical students available on the site, including tips for residency application, psychiatry-related readings, and information on psychiatry electives and service opportunities. We are also working on regional websites, which will be linked to this national website.

We look forward to seeing you all at our regional conferences and other events; please contact us if you're interested in joining or have any questions!

### National Chair:

Karen Palaszynski, UCLA SOM  
psychsign@gmail.com

### Region 1:

Justin Chen, Yale Medical School  
psychsignR1@gmail.com

### Region 2:

Margaret Haglund, Mount Sinai SOM  
psychsignR2@gmail.com

### Region 3:

Lara Cox, Univ of Pittsburgh SOM  
psychsignR3@gmail.com

### Region 4:

Emily Deringer, Univ of Michigan Medical School  
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### Region 5:

Steve Starks, LSUHSC & Jessica Birkhead, Mercer Univ SOM  
psychsignR5@gmail.com

### Region 6:

Jessica Benesch, Western UHS, & Karen Palaszynski, UCLA SOM  
psychsignR6@gmail.com

### Region 7:

Durga Roy, Univ of New Mexico SOM & Renata Yang, Oregon Health & Science Univ  
psychsignR7@gmail.com

\* American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

\*\* American Psychoanalytic Association

\*\* APA Institute for Psychiatric Services

## PsychSIGN 3rd National Meeting

The 2008 conference will be held in Washington, DC in conjunction with the APA Annual Meeting. The APA is sponsoring the hotel accommodations, conference, and meals from Friday night through Sunday for one medical student from each US and Canadian medical school. We are asking each medical school to fund the student's travel.

The conference will include talks given by practiced psychiatrists as well as interactive workshops led by medical students and residents. This is a wonderful opportunity for medical students to meet students from other schools, to learn more about psychiatry, and to learn how to create a broader discussion about psychiatry at their medical schools.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

#### Friday, May 2, 2008

Arrival and informal get-together in the evening

#### Saturday, May 3, 2008

9am to 5pm

Plenary, regional meetings and workshops

6:30 pm to 9 pm

Dinner

#### Sunday, May 4, 2008

8:00 am to 10:00 am

Residency round-table

9:00 am to 12 noon

Meeting for newly-elected PsychSIGN leaders

**WHERE:** Radisson Hotel at Reagan National Airport  
2020 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington VA 22202

\* Hotel shuttle available to and from the National Airport and Crystal City Metro stop. From the Crystal City metro, you can take the Yellow line to the Washington, DC Convention Center.

Application is available online at  
[www.psych.org/psychsign](http://www.psych.org/psychsign)



**Medical Student Newsletter  
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## ***APA Annual Meeting, May 2008***

*(Continued from page 1)*

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Renaissance

### **Monday, May 5**

"Meet the Experts: Sunny-Side Up"  
Breakfast; 7:00 am – 8:30 am at the Ren-  
aissance Ballroom East, Ballroom Level,  
Renaissance

### **Tuesday, May 6**

"Real Psychiatry: Doctors in Action"  
Video; 10:00 am – 11:30 am at the Mont-  
real Room 2, 2nd Floor, Marriott at  
Metro Center

**MINDGAMES** National Final Competi-  
tion for Residents; 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
at the Room 202A/B, Level Two, Con-  
vention Center

Minority Fellows' Evening of Excellence  
Poster Session; 5:30 pm-7:00 pm at the  
Montreal Room 2, Second Floor, Mar-  
riott at Metro Center

\*\* We are encouraging students to pre-  
sent their posters. If you are interested,  
email Marilyn King at [mking@psych.org](mailto:mking@psych.org).

### **Wednesday, May 7**

"Advocacy: What Medical Students,  
Residents, and Early Career Psychiatrists  
Need To Know To Affect Change in the  
Political Process"; 9:00 am – 10:30 am at  
the Room 102A, Level One, Convention  
Center

Join the **MD2B listserv**  
specially for medical students  
interested in psychiatry. To  
join, send your name, email  
address, medical school and

## **Psych Clerkship Pocket Cards**

Available for free download from  
the APA website are **Psych Pockets  
Cards** covering the following topics  
useful during your clerkship:

- Mental Status Examination
- Management of Overdose
- Emergency Room Psychiatry
- Laboratory Screen
- DSM-IV-TR
- Psychiatric Interview

The 10 page PDF file can be  
downloaded from  
[www.psych.org/students](http://www.psych.org/students)