



Focus on Stress

Multi-pronged approach deepens fundamental understanding 3

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FORGET ABOUT THE STEREOTYPE

of the pipe-smoking psychiatrist sitting in a comfortable chair as the patient lies on an adjacent couch, pouring out anxieties. Being a psychiatrist takes a lot of energy, as our practices are as diverse, busy and complex as any branch of medicine, particularly at an academic health center such as the University of Cincinnati's. Perhaps the only major difference from other medical practices is the poor third-party and government reimbursement to pay for the care that we deliver. This bias against mental health care only adds to the complexity of our jobs.

When I'm not darting from site to site and activity to activity, my energies are concentrated on improving mental health care in the Cincinnati region and beyond despite these limits in funding. I am fortunately not alone, as the same can be said for all the other busy clinicians, as well as staff and faculty in general, in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience. Although we put forth a good team effort, we could use some help.

We're up against a difficult economic

OUR MISSION To acquire and refine medical and scientific knowledge and then to apply it through education and clinical service toward high-quality, evidence-based treatment of people suffering from mental illnesses.

OUR VISION To be international leaders advancing the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders.

climate, which means many of the funding sources we count on are at risk. For example:

- The **Ohio Department of Mental Health** annual budget, \$511.9 million in Fiscal Year 2009, is \$485.9 million for Fiscal Year 2012—a drop of 5.1 percent; these cuts have been sustained throughout Ohio and additional cuts are likely. Ohio officials have expressed concern about expanding Medicaid coverage despite the federal health care legislation.
- **Hamilton County's Mental Health and Recovery Services Board**, which oversees 50 contract agencies, is facing possible cuts that include \$2 million in funding to the county's Mental Health Court. The board also recently eliminated 100 percent of its support for our inpatient indigent care delivered by UC Health Psychiatry. These cuts are particularly troubling because the goal of the Mental Health Court is to break the cycle of chronic mental illness and incarceration by getting the targeted population—mostly sufferers of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia—psychiatrically stable.

Particularly affected would be our **Community Oriented Accelerated Care (COAC)** unit at the Deaconess Health Campus, home to UC Health inpatient and emergency psychiatric services. COAC annually serves about 1,100 indigent and another 900 to 1,000 Medicaid clients who are some of Hamilton County's sickest

patients, and these budget cuts will severely impact our ability to care for these individuals. Concurrently, other health systems are downsizing their psychiatric programs.

Your help can come in many ways, including financial gifts to our department (*information is at the bottom of this page*) or the mental health cause of your choice. But we also welcome help in non-financial ways such as advocacy for strong mental health services to your community and state legislators, or agreeing to serve on our community advisory board (*see box, next page*).

Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience is a big department at UC (the third largest behind Pediatrics and Internal Medicine), with big ambitions. We have plenty of room for you—and your ideas to promote good mental health.

Best Wishes,

Stephen M. Strakowski, MD

*The Dr. Stanley and Mickey Kaplan Professor and Chairman
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience
Senior Associate Dean for Research,
College of Medicine
Vice President of Research, UC Health*

On the cover: The Stress Neurobiology Laboratory, directed by James Herman, PhD (*center*), is working to enhance understanding of how the brain reacts to stress. With Herman are, from left, Renu Sah, PhD, Randall Sakai, PhD, Yvonne Ulrich-Lai, PhD, and Matia Solomon, PhD. *Story, Page 2*

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UC Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neuroscience, Office of Development, P.O. Box 670570, Cincinnati, OH 45267-0570

DelBello Accepts Invitation to Chair NIH Study Section

Melissa DelBello, MD, a professor in the departments of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience and pediatrics, has accepted an invitation to serve as chairperson of the Neural Basis of Psychopathology, Addictions and Sleep Disorders Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review at the National Institutes of Health. Her term runs from July 2012 through June 2014.



DelBello

DelBello has been a member of the Study Section since 2009, aiding in review of grant applications, making recommendations on these applications and surveying the status of research in her field of science.

She serves as vice chair for clinical research for the department of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience, is co-director of the division of bipolar disorders research and is also director of research training and education for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center's division of child psychiatry.

Center for Imaging Research's Komoroski Named to Study Section

Richard Komoroski, PhD, research professor of psychiatry and associate director in the Center for Imaging Research, has accepted an invitation to serve as a member of the Neuroscience and Ophthalmic Imaging Technologies (NOIT) Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review at the National Institutes of Health for the term ending June 30, 2015.



Komoroski

The NOIT Study Section reviews applications to develop and utilize imaging, computational, informatic and

biophysical approaches for studying fundamental problems in neuroscience.

Palumbo Recognized by Healthnetwork Foundation

Todd Palumbo, MD, adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry and medical director of Sibcy House at Lindner Center of HOPE, is one of 10 winners of the 2012 Healthnetwork Foundation Service Excellence Awards. The award recognizes leading physicians who have delivered exemplary customer service to Healthnetwork patients on multiple occasions.



Palumbo

The award also recognizes the entire team of people at Lindner Center of HOPE that work with Healthnetwork referrals. The other winners include national leaders in medicine from Johns Hopkins, the Hospital for Special Surgery and Cleveland Clinic.

With the award comes a \$10,000 research grant, given to Lindner Center of HOPE, but dedicated to support the winner's research or other programs.

Shear Named to American Psychological Association Post

Paula Shear, PhD, professor of psychology and psychiatry, has been elected by her peers to serve a one-year term as president-elect of the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 40. Upon completion of her term as president-elect, Shear will serve consecutive one-year terms as president and past president, respectively.



Shear

Division 40, the APS's division of clinical neuropsychology, has about 5,000 members. It is devoted to the study of brain-behavior relationships and the clinical application of that knowledge to

human problems; promotes the use of scientific research to develop its knowledge base and clinical techniques; and is active in the development and promotion of quality standards of professional training and practice.

Ulrich-Lai Receives Early Investigators Award

Yvonne Ulrich-Lai, PhD, was selected by the Endocrine Society to receive the 2012 Early Investigators Award. She attended the society's annual awards dinner at ENDO 2012 in Houston June 22. ■



Ulrich-Lai

Grants

James Herman, PhD:

\$29,291

Department of Veterans Affairs:
Central Neuropeptide Y (NPY):
A Novel Target for PTSD Pathophysiology

Renu Sah, PhD:

\$397,405

National Institute of Mental Health:
Acid-sensing and panic

Yvonne Ulrich-Lai, PhD:

\$353,125

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:
Food Reward and Stress

Theresa Winhusen, PhD:

\$1,176,978

National Institute on Drug Abuse:
Competing Renewal of Clinical Trials Network, Ohio Valley Node

Theresa Winhusen, PhD:

\$665,293

National Institute on Drug Abuse:
Competing Renewal of Clinical Trials Network, Ohio Valley Node

Stephen Woods, PhD, and Min Liu, PhD

(Pathology and Laboratory Medicine):
\$329,700

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:
Ginsenoside Rb1: A novel Anti-Obesity and Anti-Hyperglycemic Compound ■

To advance the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders through education and clinical services, we are forming a community advisory board. If interested, please contact Kathy Nullmeier at 513-558-6769 or kathy.nullmeier@uc.edu. ■

Researchers Examine How Brain Controls Stress

Everyone experiences stress, to some degree. But how many people actually understand stress? That's the question Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience faculty members are working on at UC's Reading Campus.

"What we're trying to do is develop a multi-pronged group of stress-oriented investigators who can cover a wide area of the problem without duplicating each other," says James Herman, PhD, professor and director of the Stress Neurobiology Laboratory. "Everyone has their own individual niche, interconnected with the general concept of stress biology."

Herman works with faculty members Randall Sakai, PhD, Renu Sah, PhD, and Yvonne Ulrich-Lai, PhD, along with Matia Solomon, PhD, who officially joined the

team in August as a faculty member in the department of psychology with a secondary appointment in psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience.

"What we're most known for is our work in delineating the pathways to the brain that controls stress responding," says Herman. "Our group has been the one that has put the whole notion of balance among the brain's limbic regions on the map in terms of stress regulation—certainly of hormone secretion, but probably generalizing to autonomic function and behavior as well."

The brain takes information coming in, Herman explains, and filters it through its memory systems to create an inter-linked set of descending information that converges on the physiological systems

that mount stress responses. The pre-frontal cortex (executive control), hippocampus (memory) and amygdala (emotion) work together to control stress responding.

"If you take any one of those things out of the equation, you end up with a pathological response," Herman says.

Researchers in the stress lab are also known for defining domains of glucocorticoid signaling in the brain, Herman says, referring to the hormones that produce an array of physical and mental responses to stress.

"It used to be thought that there was one region of the brain that recognized glucocorticoids, and that was it," Herman says. "We've shown that it's important to know that these pieces of information come in to all regions of the brain, and it's the aggregate signal that really dictates what the outflow is."

In an attention-grabbing research paper published in *PNAS*, the official journal of the National Academy of Sciences, Ulrich-Lai and Herman demonstrated that pleasurable activity reduces stress by inhibiting anxiety responses in the brain. The research identified key neural circuits related to pleasurable activity, including "comfort food" or sex.

In another high-profile paper, Herman, Sakai and Solomon were part of a team that showed that elevated levels of sodium blunt the body's natural responses to stress by inhibiting stress hormones that would otherwise be activated in stressful situations. The research was reported in *The Journal of Neuroscience*, the official journal of the Society for Neuroscience.

Earlier this year, Sah received word that she has won a \$397,405 award from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Mental Health for research into the neurological basis of panic disorder. And Ulrich-Lai, who trained with Herman as a postdoc, received a \$353,125 award from the NIH's National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases for her investigations into the relationship between food and stress. Total funding for the group is more than \$2.5 million a year.

Stress Neurobiology Laboratory

James Herman, PhD, professor and director, Stress Neurobiology Laboratory

Research focus: Stress pathways to the brain, with particular emphasis on what goes wrong under pathological circumstances. Major disease focuses in the area of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Randall Sakai, PhD, professor

Research focus: Behavioral, neuroendocrine and neurochemical effects associated with chronic stress, with particular emphasis on stress and depression. Currently examining the effects of social stress using neuroethological rodent models.

Yvonne Ulrich-Lai, PhD, assistant professor

Research focus: Identifying the neural and hormonal substrates responsible for interactions among diet, obesity and stress. Exploring how the consumption of "comfort foods" alters the brain to confer stress relief.

Renu Sah, PhD, assistant professor

Research focus: Neurobiology of anxiety disorders using translational approaches, with the long-term goal of identifying novel therapeutic targets of intervention. Current studies focus on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and panic disorder.

Matia Solomon, PhD, assistant professor

Research focus: Understanding the neurobiology of depression and complex social behavior. Currently investigating novel pre-clinical models of depression (i.e., chronic stress, post-partum) and social anxiety. ■



Herman



Sakai



Ulrich-Lai



Sah



Solomon

“Our group has been the one that has put the whole notion of balance among the brain’s limbic regions on the map in terms of stress regulation—certainly of hormone secretion, but probably generalizing to autonomic function and behavior as well.”

James Herman, PhD, director, Stress Neurobiology Laboratory

Plenty of mysteries remain, Herman says, including understanding how stress reactions vary between resilience and resistance.

“Why is it that some people are likely to become depressed after a traumatic experience and others can have exactly the same experience and have no symptoms whatsoever,” he asks. “Or why does one person become depressed and the other person have post-traumatic stress disorder?”

“And the other big question is, what can we do about it? A lot of our drugs medicate the entire body, with all its ramifications. So one of the challenges will be to develop circuit-based medicine where we can figure out how to get precisely targeted molecules that can reduce the impact of stress on malfunctioning brain pathways without also affecting other critical brain functions.” ■



Total funding for the stress neurobiology group is more than \$2.5 million a year.

Herman with Ulrich-Lai

October CME Programs Include Presentation by Nobel Laureate

Two Continuing Medical Education (CME) programs will be offered by the department of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience in October.

Nobel Prize winner Eric Kandel, MD, will speak at the **Lurie Family Lecture** at noon Wednesday, Oct. 3, in Kresge Auditorium (Medical Sciences Building) on the neurobiology of memory deficits in schizophrenia and Alzheimer’s disease.



Kandel

The annual **Psychopharmacology Update** will be held Saturday, Oct. 20, at the Kingsgate Conference Center on the medical campus. This year’s topic will be, “The Latest Psychopharmacology Advances: New Medications and New Formulations.”

Both programs will offer CME credit. For further information on CME programs, contact the CME manager, Angela Olive, at 513-558-5236 or the CME director, Henry Nasrallah, MD, at 513-558-4615. ■

CONGRATULATIONS to our 2012 Graduates

Continued success in your career.

Heather Adams, DO

*Pediatrics/Psychiatry/
Child Psychiatry*

Jessica Anne Lammers, MD

General Psychiatry

Deb Amann, MD

General Psychiatry

Amy Pravin Shah, MD

General Psychiatry

Jennifer Bowden, MD

*Pediatrics/Psychiatry/
Child Psychiatry*

Cathy Ann Southammakosane, MD

*Pediatrics/Psychiatry/
Child Psychiatry*

Lisa Gray, MD

Geriatric Psychiatry

Stephen Warnick Jr., MD

Family Medicine/Psychiatry

Anita Karnik, MD

Addiction Psychiatry

John Wirick, MD

General Psychiatry ■

Goal: Stopping Mental Illness Before It Tragically Unfurls

*In a nightmare of déjà vu, a young adult inflicts a paroxysm of violence upon society. In the latest example, in suburban Denver, a 24-year-old man kills 12 people and shoots dozens more. In the week that followed, specialists with the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience and the Mood Disorders Center at the UC Neuroscience Institute provided media interviews to help the public grapple with how such a tragedy could occur and how future tragedies might be prevented. Here, **Melissa DelBello, MD**, professor of psychiatry and pediatrics and co-director of the Division of Bipolar Disorders Research in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience, discusses recognition and prevention of serious mental illness.*



Melissa DelBello, MD

Cindy Starr / Mayfield Clinic

Many of the perpetrators of mass violence are young individuals who seemed normal earlier in their lives. What has happened in these cases?

Dr. DelBello: Late adolescence and early adulthood is the most common period of onset of psychiatric disorders, specifically psychotic and mood disorders. There are multiple stressors during this period, including going off to college and making important career and personal life decisions. There is also the potential for substance use, since this is the most common period for exposure to alcohol and drugs. Finally, genetics and neuro-development are biological aspects that contribute to the onset of these illnesses.

Should we be paying more careful attention to young people during this critical phase of their lives?

Dr. DelBello: This is a time for people to be watching. This includes family, friends, co-workers, roommates. Signs to look for are a change in behavior, sleep patterns, appetite or interests; an inability to perform as well as the person previously did; signs of functional impairment or impaired logic or thinking; evidence that a person is starting to use drugs or alcohol; signs that the person is withdrawing or isolating himself from friends.

Is there anything you personally took away from the latest tragedy? A wish that society could do something that it is not currently doing?

Dr. DelBello: What happened is incredibly tragic. I don't know that all of the preventive strategies in the world would have stopped it. But if I had a wish it would be

that more research is devoted to preventing these illnesses so that we could understand exactly how the combination of these risk factors and the interaction of genetics and abnormal brain development unfold. Being able to somehow intervene and slow down or prevent the onset of mental illness would be the ultimate goal.

Some of this research is ongoing right now at UC and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Dr. DelBello: We are doing high-risk studies in children of parents with bipolar disorder, trying to look at the longitudinal course of these children in order to identify whether there are biological or clinical factors that predict who is going to go on to develop a mood disorder. I'm involved in the study where we recruit children, 8-20, who have at least one parent with bipolar disorder. They participate in a neuroimaging study, and then over time we ask them about their mood and function. Once they start developing symptoms, we follow them very closely and perform another neuroimaging scan to identify brain changes predictive of and associated with illness development.

In another study, we are treating children who develop early depressive symptoms with omega 3 fatty acids. The earlier in the child's development the symptoms appear, the more benign the treatment has to be. If they haven't developed a full-blown illness, it's hard to use medications that treat bipolar disorder, which have potentially signifi-

But if I had a wish it would be that more research is devoted to preventing these illnesses so that we could understand exactly how the combination of these risk factors and the interaction of genetics and abnormal brain development unfold.

cant side effects. So you have to intervene with something more benign, such as therapy or nutraceuticals. We've been looking at omega 3 fatty acids because there's some evidence that one of the factors that contribute to the onset of bipolar disorder may be low omega 3 levels.

Are these studies still enrolling?

Dr. DelBello: Yes. Our goal, ultimately, is to figure out what combination of biological, environmental and genetic risk factors contribute to the onset of bipolar disorder. We want to learn how to predict when we should intervene and at what point, before the full-blown illness has developed. ■

Interview by Cindy Starr

For more on clinical research studies, visit psychiatry.uc.edu and click on research.

Faculty Members Receive Promotions

Congratulations to faculty members recently approved for promotion:

Muhammad Aslam, MD, from assistant professor to associate professor. *Dr. Aslam, based at the Cincinnati Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, is director of geriatric psychiatry fellowship, education and research.*

Brian Evans, DO, from assistant professor to associate professor. *Dr. Evans is director of the department's residency program and director of medical student education.*

Suzanne Sampang, MD, from assistant professor to associate professor. *Based at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Dr. Sampang is director of the child and adolescent residency program.*

Denise Gibson, PhD, from associate professor to professor emerita. *Dr. Gibson retired after serving the past seven years as assistant dean for academic support in the College of Medicine's Office of Student Affairs.* ■



Aslam



Evans



Sampang



Gibson

WELCOME to our Incoming Residents and Fellows

General Psychiatry Residents



Matthew Colburn, MD
Saint Louis University
School of Medicine



Mitul Dadhania, MD
University of Cincinnati
College of Medicine



Tomeika Dobson, DO
Edward Via College of
Osteopathic Medicine



Courtney McKenzie, MD
University of Louisville
School of Medicine



Palev Mehta, MD
American University
of Antigua College
of Medicine



Ashaki Warren, MD
Morehouse
School of Medicine

Psychiatry / Child Psychiatry / Pediatrics



Sophianne Subbiah, MD
University of Iowa
Carver College of
Medicine



Theresa Umhoefer, MD
University of Wisconsin
Medical School



**Melissa Wagner-
Schuman, MD**
Medical College
of Wisconsin

Family Medicine / Psychiatry



Robert Pulliam, MD
University of Cincinnati
College of Medicine



Nicholas Wittry, MD
University of Cincinnati
College of Medicine

Addiction Psychiatry Fellows



Jennie Hahn, MD
University of Cincinnati
College of Medicine



Christine Wilder, MD
University of Virginia
School of Medicine

Geriatric Psychiatry Fellow Addiction Medicine Research Fellow



Amy Shah, MD
University of Louisville
School of Medicine



Clifford Cabansag, MD
Loma Linda University
School of Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Focus on Staff With **KATI ELFERS**

*With more than 100 faculty members and research and clinical sites that include the Academic Health Center, Reading Campus and Lindner Center of HOPE, the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience is a sprawling operation. Overseeing its business operations is the job of **Kati Elfers, executive director, business and administration**. Here she talks about working at her alma mater, UC.*

What is a typical day for you?

"Every day is different and it's hard to describe to people what I do. I definitely spend a lot of time in meetings and responding to emails. I manage all financial and HR aspects for a very large department, so I work very closely on a regular basis with the managers in my department to ensure all areas are running smoothly. When an issue or problem is brought to my attention, we immediately work to improve it."

What do you enjoy about your job?

"I never know what I am going to encounter any day at work. I like the fast pace and the variety of items that I deal with in my job."

Before you came to UC, what was your background?

"I have always been at UC! I started here in the department of psychiatry as a student worker in 2001 when I was working on my undergraduate degree at UC. It has been such a wonderful place to work that I have never left."

Do you have any hobbies?

"I love to shop, exercise, travel and spend time with my family and friends."

Tell us something people might not know about you.

"My first word was 'shoes.' I loved shoes so much that I slept in them and now I own too many pairs to count!" ■

