

UCT Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health Newsletter

Issue 13 – June 2021



A NOTE FROM THE HOD

This newsletter goes out just as the third wave of Covid-19 is building, and lock-down has again been escalated. While the Johnson & Johnson vaccine provided health workers with a sense of relief, there is concern now about the spread of the delta variant. At Groote Schuur Hospital, a whole-of-hospital approach has again been taken, with all Departments including Psychiatry involved in Covid-19 care.

With further escalation of the epidemic, there will again be concerns about the negative impact on mental health. Recent data from the NIDS-CRAM study emphasize the link between depression and hunger in the community. Indeed, the social determinants of mental disorder are particularly apparent during the time of Covid-19.

We should, I believe, adopt a “precision public mental health” at this time. Lock-downs, for example, should be targeted more precisely to avoid any adverse mental health impacts (e.g. from unnecessary school closures). Furthermore, to reduce mental suffering and prevent mental disorders, the most efficient and cost-effective intervention is rapid and widespread roll-out of vaccines; ongoing delays are having tragic consequences.

I wish everyone in the department, and particularly those who have lost loved ones, all strength in the weeks to come. Our newsletter gives many examples of colleagues taking initiative and pulling together: I trust that we will continue to do so at this very difficult time.

Warm regards,
Dan Stein



IN THIS ISSUE

COMMENTS

Thanks to department colleagues and others for submitting contributions to the newsletter. If you have any comments or suggestions for future newsletter issues or would like to volunteer to be part of the newsletter team, please make contact with the editors.

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CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH

FAREWELL TO WENDY VOGEL

By John-Joe Dawson-Squibb



Dr Wendy Vogel (above) recently retired as Head of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (DCAP), a position she held since 2011. Wendy originally trained in Radiography before her medical training at the University of Witwatersrand. She was then a Psychiatric Registrar at Tara Hospital in Johannesburg before going on to do her Specialist Training in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the mid-90's at the Memorial Institutes Child and Family Unit in Gauteng. Her journey also included being Senior Specialist and Head of Alexandra/Tara's Child & Adolescent Psychiatry clinic. Despite such a busy clinical demand, Wendy was also the National Chairperson of the South African Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (SA-ACAPAP) between 1999-2001. Awards from the University of Witwatersrand and Gauteng Department of Health have all confirmed her care and the important role she's played in shaping child and adolescent mental health.

A time out of South Africa from 2002, first in Aberdeen, Scotland, and then in London as Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist and Borough lead in Hounslow,

were milestones before being appointed head of DCAP. Wendy used her experience in the UK to shape DCAP, moving it towards a service that was determined to serve the South African population while still ensuring it met high, internationally recognised standards. Her own particular interest in neurodevelopmental disorders (with a keen awareness for the underdiagnosing of females with autism) was central to the development of a neurodevelopmental clinic at the Red Cross Children's Hospital. Her close work across the child and adolescent platform with Lentegour and Tygerberg Hospital ensured more aligned services and her friendships with her equivalents in those hospitals, Drs Rene Nassen and Sue Hawkrige, speaks to their forged alliances in often trying circumstances.

Wendy thoroughly enjoyed her clinical work and would recall faces and details of patients she'd seen many years prior. Her interest in autism and working with others to arrive at a diagnosis, particularly for girls where it had been missed, was a knack often remarked on! Her thoughtfulness towards others (always a card, coffee and pack of biscuits for new staff), generosity, and excitement for celebrating birthdays and teas will be sorely missed at DCAP. Caring and fond speeches at her farewell by many were the order of the day. Wendy's own speech spoke of her long association with the Red Cross since childhood, fitting then that she ended as Head of the Clinical Unit.

Farewells and retirements are complicated things, never coming at the times we want. Her on-going history project, documenting child and adolescent psychiatry in the country with her partner-in-crime Rene Nassen, and the call of Sedgfield, will mean the stage is set for a balance of reflection, rest and on-going efforts to expand child and adolescent psychiatry. We're looking forward to seeing how it unfolds, over a cup of tea, up the garden route. 🍵

CONGRATULATIONS

To Dr Papani Gasela on being appointed as Head of Division for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. She takes the reigns from Wendy Vogel and we wish her and the Division all the best going forwards. 🟢

PROF DE VRIES HIGHLIGHTS THE NEEDS OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE IN AFRICA

Extracted from UCT News article

Prof De Vries delivered the opening lecture at the International Society of Autism Research (INSAR) global conference in May 2021. He is the founding director of the Centre for Autism Research in Africa (CARA).



Above: Prof de Vries (front middle) and the CARA team. Photograph by Izak de Vries © CARA

Prof De Vries focused his lecture on the question of what research should be done and where it should be done, highlighting that the vast majority of people with autism and other developmental disabilities live in low- to middle-income countries in the context of inadequate services, expertise and research. He encouraged socially responsive research which should be done in collaboration with families and community stakeholders and where their needs can drive meaningful, relevant and innovative research. He also challenged the autism researcher community to address research inequities by building improved research capacity in these countries.

The full article can be accessed on

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/> 🟢

CONSULTATION LIAISON PSYCHIATRY

CONGRATULATIONS

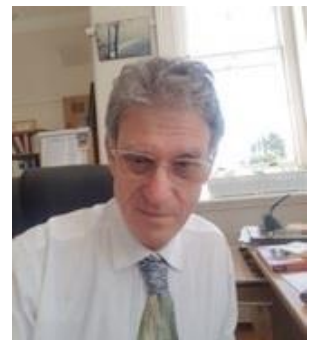
Prof Jackie Hoare is the first and only doctor to be registered on the General Medical Council (GMC) UK register as a Neuropsychiatrist. The Royal College of Psychiatrists have extended their congratulations and have published an interview with Prof Hoare in their Summer 2021 edition of RCPsych Insight. It can be accessed on the following link

https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/members/rcpsych-insight-magazine/rcpsych-insight-16---summer-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=4c99894_8 🟢

FORENSIC MENTAL HEALTH

FAREWELL

We said goodbye to Prof Sean Kaliski (right) who retired in May this year. He was a longstanding member of the department, is a stalwart in the forensic psychiatry field and a charismatic personality known for his interesting ties and even more interesting talks. He will be missed by those who worked with him. 🟢



CONGRATULATIONS



To Dr Nyameka Dyakalashé (left) on being appointed as Head of Division of Forensic Psychiatry. No doubt the Division will thrive under her leadership and we wish her and the Division all the best going forwards. 🟢

GENERAL ADULT PSYCHIATRY

MINDFULNESS AT VALKENBERG HOSPITAL

By Tessa Roos and Jacqui Wigg

Mindfulness is everywhere and has been promoted in almost every setting although it is not yet part of formal medical or psychiatry training in South Africa. A useful definition is 'the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose in the present moment, non-judgmentally.' (Kabat-Zinn J, Full Catastrophe Living, 1990, 2013). Tessa Roos and Jacqui Wigg have just completed the two year post graduate certification in Mindfulness Interventions through Stellenbosch University. We met on the program and combined our different skills to form a supportive teaching team. Tessa is a psychiatrist and member of the UCT department of Psychiatry and mental Health. Jacqui is a teacher working in educational program research. In the face of multiple threats and stressors in the health system, teaching mindfulness to health professionals is one practical way to offer a real skill in dealing with the realities of life and work and improving work satisfaction and patient care.

A Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course at VBH

As part of our training, we needed to teach a mindfulness course with supervision and write up. We chose to teach MBSR as the original program developed by one of the founders of secular mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, at the University of Massachusetts Medical school in the 1970's. The program is well researched and manualized. Despite working hard to market it at Valkenberg Hospital, after only recruiting three participants, we shared the invitation more broadly and our final group included 1 manager, 1 admin staff member, 1 psychiatrist, 2 district medical officers, 4 district mental health nurses, 1 district physiotherapist and 3 psychiatry registrars. 3 dropped out early on and 11 completed the program. The course ran over 9

weeks with 2 hour sessions Friday lunch time. Home practice included recordings of guided meditations we provided. Recording without fancy equipment was quite a challenge, once getting over hearing our own voices we then had to compete with dogs barking and traffic! The course feedback was encouraging, some comments from participants:

"Most valuable for me was the structure of weekly groups and commitment to and accountability for regular practice."

"The day retreat definitely marked a significant shift for me... Somehow being present in that way for an extended period made subsequent practices seem more manageable."

"Self-appreciation, kindness to self. Gratitude towards myself."



Above: Jacqui Wigg and Tessa Roos

Less formal open sessions at Valkenberg

We wanted to offer something more accessible so in May we started 30 minute guided mindfulness practices open to all staff on Thursdays at lunch. So far, we have had between 2 to 7 participants a week. We have done body scanning, awareness of breath practice, mindful movement, walking and eating meditation. Please do join us!

UCT medical student teaching

We are planning a pilot mindfulness programme as an elective to fourth year students during their psychiatry rotation later in 2021. Capitalising on them all having laptops and data provided, we will be doing this online. Although we were initially cynical, mindfulness course online has worked well during the pandemic.

Mindfulness is not a panacea and our course openly engaged with the limits and controversies around mindfulness. However, both through our own practice and through teaching, we have seen the value that this simple, yet challenging practice can bring to anyone willing to try it. ■

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY MENTAL HEALTH

CONGRATULATIONS

To Babalwa Tyabashe-Phume (below) who was awarded 3-year funding for her doctoral degree from the Bongani Mayosi Fund. Babalwa is a social worker by profession. She holds a bachelor's degree in social work (UJ), a master's degree in child and family studies (UWC- Cum Laude). She is currently a PhD candidate in the division and supervised by Prof Sharon Kleintjes. Babalwa's study intends to develop a conceptual framework that will support persons with intellectual disabilities to self-advocate for inclusion of their priorities in social and health related policy in South Africa. She has worked extensively with children and families, providing counselling and social services and is



passionate about mental health and intellectual disabilities. Babalwa believes that everyone is equal and should be treated as such. ■

PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY

FAREWELL TO SHAREEFA DALVIE

By Nastassja Koen

I first spotted Shareefa (below) in the parking lot outside the (then) J2 building. She was toting what looked like a large white cooler box; and was clearly a woman on a mission. When we met formally a few weeks later, I learnt that she was actually the unsung hero of ferrying multiple batches of research samples between J2 and the FHS Campus! It was 2011; we had both just started our PhDs in the Department; and little did I know that this was the beginning of a decade of merriment and (mis)adventures together...



During the early years, Shareefa and I worked in parallel – but fairly separately – as she was based in the Division of Human Genetics on the FHS Campus. We both graduated in 2015 (though with her trademark unassuming brilliance, she pipped me to the post by half a year!); and our postdoctoral work then began to align quite closely. We were both interested in neuropsychiatric genetics research in South Africa and, fortuitously, were appointed to co-head the Psychiatric Genetics Group in the Department's new Brain-Behaviour Unit. We then made the high-risk (and it turns out, high-reward) decision to share an office during our relocation to the GSH OPD. It was during this period that I really came to know and value Shareefa's good grace, good sense and good humour.

Professionally, Shareefa has excelled in the Department – she has published a host of high-impact papers and book chapters on psychiatric genomics; and is on the editorial board of the journals, “Complex Psychiatry” and “Frontiers in Psychiatry “. She has also led multiple international collaborations, including with the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium, in which she co-heads the Systems Biology Working Group. In recognition of her work and contributions, she was promoted ad hominem to a Senior Lecturer in 2019.

Shareefa has also established herself as a kind and empathic mentor, and nurtures both the academic progress and the well-being of her students. As testament of this, she currently supervises four PhD students, and co-supervises another two! Despite this heavy workload, she is able to champion each of her students and mentees, enabling them to develop and shine in their own right.

On multiple occasions, I have seen Shareefa embody being a “good citizen” of the Department. In 2020, she took over the DRC’s Postgraduate Student Support & Liaison portfolio, during what would prove to be an extremely challenging year. In this role, her endeavours ranged from organising a virtual information and engagement session for the students; to (physically) accompanying their desks in transit to the new Neuroscience Institute! Extra-curricularly, she has also co-ordinated the Annual Grade 11 Learners’ Open Day, hosted by the Divisions of Human Genetics, Medical Biochemistry and Cell Biology; organised the IBRO-UCT African Advanced School on Neuropsychiatric Genomics; and lectured on psychiatric genetics at UCT’s Summer and Winter schools, and at the 100UP School Improvement Initiative.

This is a very bittersweet goodbye. Shareefa and I have shared so many professional and personal milestones over the last 10 years; and in many ways, we have grown up together in the Department. Nonetheless, I know that this next chapter – as a Specialist Scientist in the Biomedical Research and Innovation Platform at the South African Medical Research Council – will be an

outstanding one for her. I very much look forward to following her stellar career, and hope to work with her again in future.

Shareefa – you’ve been a wonderful colleague, office-mate, travel-buddy and friend; and I know that only good things lie ahead for you! 🍀

MEGA PROJECT – SUMMARY

By Deborah Muller and Adele Pretorius



Promoting mental health is one of the main targets of the UN’s SDG 2030. It has put emphasis on the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, including children and adolescent’s mental health disorders, which constitute a major challenge for sustainable development. Keeping young people healthy has a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness, thus new innovations are needed to find solutions to promote mental health and prevent mental health problems.

Half of the mental problems start before the age of 14. The environment has direct and indirect effects on mental health. Environmental influences should be taken more into account with adolescents. Exposure to poor environmental conditions is not randomly distributed and tends to concentrate more on the poor and ethnic minorities. We focus our attention on the health implications of multiple environmental risk exposure.

The MEGA study is a collaboration with UCT, the Universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Free State, University of Zambia, Lusaka Apex Medical University, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Riga Technical University and Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. It is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU.

The main aims of this project were to identify gaps in PHC practitioner knowledge with regard to child and adolescent mental health, to provide training to address these gaps and to develop a locally relevant m-health tool to screen for these problems. A further aim was also to improve access to mental health services and enhancing appropriate care for the youth in South Africa and Zambia. The participants of the UCT component of the study were recruited from various Community Health Centres and Clinics. These included, Crossroads CDC, Mitchells Plain CHC and Dr Abdurahman CDC, Delft CDC and Bellville South CDC.

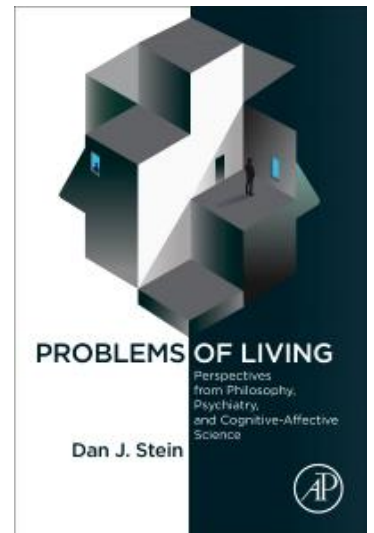
Two face-to-face training sessions were held, one in 2020 and the other in 2021 with the delay being as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. The training comprised 7 sections, each covering a mental health category that is prominently found in the adolescent population. The 8th session covered the use of the MEGA application. Included in the training were the use of videos, role plays, reflective exercises and plenary sessions to engage the participants on the content.

The experiences and feedback from the participants was positive and they were very enthusiastic about the content. Participants found the information useful as they had not been exposed to the in-depth knowledge offered in the content as well as creating an awareness of the extent to which adolescents may be challenged. They also expressed gratitude as it gave them the opportunity to engage with colleagues on both the content, but also their experiences in the field. Furthermore, they found the application to be user friendly. The short and concise questions with the quick responses are ideal for the limited time they have in the clinics to screen adolescents for mental health concerns. The questions also serve as prompts for them to engage the adolescent further if time allows. They found the role plays related to the application extremely useful as it gave insight and also created awareness about their own behaviours and approaches in practice. ■

PROBLEMS OF LIVING

By Dan Stein

It seems to me hard to practice psychiatry without asking some key “big questions”, both about the nature of the mind (and mental illness) in particular, and about the nature of life (and mental suffering) in general. More than a decade ago I published a volume, “Philosophy of Psychopharmacology”, in which I addressed some of the “hard problems” faced by mental health clinicians, with a particular focus on



philosophical issues raised or addressed by advances in psychiatric medication. This year I’ve published my second volume at the intersection of psychiatry and philosophy, “Problems of Living”, in which I look at a range of “hard problems” raised by life as a whole, with a particular focus on philosophical issues raised or addressed by advances in the cognitive-affective sciences including psychology and neuroscience.

I view my approach in both of these volumes as “integrative” in a number of ways. First, I often spell out debates in the psychiatric or philosophical literature, and then take a “middle way” that I see as drawing on the best points made by the protagonists in the debate. Second, in thinking through the “big questions” and “hard problems”, I draw on a range of disciplines, including not only philosophy, but also psychiatry, psychology, and neuroscience. Third, I often juxtapose authors from different times and places; Aristotle, Spinoza, Hume, Dewey, Jaspers, and Lakoff are amongst my favourites, perhaps precisely because each covered so many different areas, bringing

together different disciplines, with a wisdom and practical judgment that remains relevant.

I can imagine that a registrar in psychiatry, working in the trenches, and swotting neuroscience for exams, might well shrug his or her shoulders in response to this all, perhaps even rolling their eyes at the disjuncture between intellectual pretension and clinical reality. Similarly, an individual suffering from a mental disorder, that perhaps has not responded successfully to modern interventions, may be less interested in conceptual niceties, than in psychiatry making practical progress. On the other hand, for a philosopher doing cutting-edge work in metaphysics or epistemology, this volume doesn't cut the mustard; it lacks the rigour that sophisticated philosophy requires. And for the hard-nosed neuroscientist, the excursions made by the volume into brain research may similarly smack of over-simplification.

But perhaps this is a space worth holding: stepping back far enough from clinical realities to try to contribute to work on the "big questions" and "hard problems", but not stepping back so far as to lose touch with key concerns for clinicians and patients working and living at the coalface. And I'd also like to hold a space that tries to make a contribution, but that doesn't necessarily offer resolution: the thing about the "big questions" and "hard problems" is that there isn't necessarily a single best answer, these involve "essentially contested" constructs and issues, which don't give way to simple solutions, but which entail complexity and wickedness, and which it is therefore crucial to keep discussing.

"Philosophy of Psychopharmacology" argues that psychiatry is precisely the sort of field that should on the one hand acknowledge its own fallibility, while at the same time try to make a positive difference - even though we have still so much to learn about the brain-mind and its disorders, and even though our interventions are far from ideal. "Problems in Living" argues that any answers to the problems of living can only be partial and tentative, but that we should

nevertheless persist in trying to live meaningful lives – even though we have still so much to learn about human nature and the world, and despite life's apparent absurdity. Taken together they argue that it's key to find a balance between overly optimistic Panglossian views of psychiatry and of life, and unremittingly pessimistic perspectives, and to keep moving forwards - as best we can - with each. ■

NEUROPSYCHIATRY

RAPID AND AUTOMATED SCREENING FOR DEMENTIA

By Nina Steenkamp and Rhiannon Changuion

Recent estimates suggest that, worldwide, there are approximately 47 million people living with dementia. The largest proportion of these reside in low- or middle-income countries (LMICs) such as South Africa. Even in the absence of nationwide population-based estimates of dementia prevalence, the poorly-resourced South African healthcare system is concerned by what appears to be steadily increasing rates of this neurodegenerative disorder. Currently, the South African physician-to-patient ratio is 9:10 000, which severely limits capacity to screen/assess, diagnose, and treat dementias.



Above: Back row- Prof Kevin Thomas, Rhiannon Changuion and Dr Michael Ssonko. Front row- Dr Hetta Gouse, Prof Marc Combrinck and Nina Steenkamp.

Therefore, a brief cognitive assessment tool that can be administered by non-experts or lay providers is needed to improve clinical care and outcomes.

An interdisciplinary team, headed by Dr Hetta Gouse (Division of Neuropsychiatry, UCT) and Prof Reuben Robbins (HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, Columbia University), has launched a research study (Alzheimer's Disease NeuroScreen; ADiNS) that is designed to adapt and investigate the validity of a brief, tablet-based neuropsychological test battery for use in the assessment of older South African adults with suspected cognitive decline and/or dementia.

The app, NeuroScreen, takes approximately 30 minutes to administer and has previously been validated for use in South African adults with HIV. It assesses cognition in six cognitive domains: motor speed, processing speed, working memory, learning and memory, and executive functioning. NeuroScreen is portable, self-contained and highly automated; it has standardized audio-visual instructions, requires minimal training to administer, and can yield test results immediately. Furthermore, results are easily transmitted to other providers via electronic records, thereby increasing the ease and convenience of remote monitoring. Because it captures a range of data (e.g., reaction time, time to complete tasks, and user errors), NeuroScreen is particularly well suited as a research tool.

The ADiNS study, which is funded by the US National Institutes of Health, has three distinct aims: (1) adapting NeuroScreen for use with older adults; (2) translating its stimulus materials into Afrikaans; and (3) generating psychometric indicators for the test battery by examining construct validity, inter-rater reliability for item scoring, and test-retest reliability between NeuroScreen and a gold standard neuropsychological test battery. The study is the first step in addressing the need for a culturally acceptable, reliable, and valid tablet-based cognitive screening tool for use in older South African adults.

NeuroScreen has great potential to revolutionise research and clinical practice in LMICs such as South

Africa by increasing capacity to screen, triage, and assess more patients. The app facilitates task-shifting and could fill a critical gap in clinical care and research assessment needs. Ultimately, it can improve the medical outcomes of older South Africans by helping a resource-constrained health system better track and monitor patients' cognitive status.

Dr Gouse is working in collaboration with Prof Marc Combrinck (UCT Division of Geriatric Medicine) and Prof Kevin Thomas (UCT Department of Psychology). The project is being managed by Ms Nina Steenkamp. Recruitment at Groote Schuur Hospital's Memory Clinic and Geriatric Clinic will continue until the end of 2021. ■

ADELE MARAIS APPOINTED AS PI ON STUDY OF MASCULINITY, STIGMA AND DISCLOSURE ON MEN'S ART INITIATION IN SA

By Adele Marias

Dr Adele Marais - a Senior Clinical Psychologist in the Division – has been appointed Principal Investigator on a R21 grant for 'A Longitudinal Mixed-Methods Investigation of Masculinity, Stigma, and Disclosure on Men's ART Initiation in South Africa'. The study is funded by the 'National Institute of Mental Health' (NIMH), and is in collaboration with U.S. investigators at the University of Maryland.

Over 7.9 million people in South Africa are living with HIV and one significant barrier to ending this epidemic is engaging and retaining men in HIV care. Among men living with HIV in South Africa, only 63% who know their status have initiated antiretroviral therapy (ART). This mixed-methods study focuses on hegemonic masculinity beliefs (HMBs), or the idealized forms of what it means to 'be a man' - which has been identified as a major reason why men do not seek and stay

engaged in HIV care. The extent to which men internalise hegemonic masculinity can make disclosure of their HIV status challenging; yet, disclosure is often the avenue through which men gain the necessary social support needed to seek and be retained in HIV care.

This project aims to examine whether disclosing HIV status mediates the association between HMBs and HIV care engagement and whether internalised stigma moderates the association between HMBs and disclosure among men newly diagnosed with HIV. The study will recruit newly-diagnosed men living with HIV and assess HMBs (among several other psychological and mental health measures) within two weeks of testing positive and then again 3 and 6 months later. Data on HIV care engagement will be assessed at the 6-month assessment via chart review. The study will examine whether, and how, the process of disclosure shifts men’s views of their own masculinity. A subset of men who disclose their HIV status and those who do not disclose will be randomly selected to participate in individual qualitative interviews to further explain if, and how, disclosure led to a shift in HMBs. Recruitment of participants is anticipated to start in August at numerous clinics in Khayelitsha. Results will be used to inform subsequent intervention development.

Dr Adele Marais will be the UCT-based Principal Investigator, and will collaborate with Prof Jessica Magidson at the University of Maryland (UMD), and Dr Jennifer Belus at the ‘Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute’ (Swiss TPH). Local consultants on the study are Prof John Joska in our Department at UCT, and Prof Ashraf Kagee at the University of Stellenbosch. Dr Marais’ other clinical research has focused on understanding the qualitative lived experience of at-risk or vulnerable populations living with HIV, the intersection of intimate partner violence and HIV, and the need for gender affirming care for gender diverse persons. The research of Dr Belus and Prof Magidson has focused on addressing the mental health and substance use needs of people living with HIV, and

improving engagement along the HIV care cascade in South Africa. ■

PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH

TRANSFORMING A THREE-WEEK ORIENTATION BLOCK INTO AN ONLINE LEARNING FESTIVAL

By Claire van der Westhuizen

How do you create an online space which rivals the energy of a face-to-face engagement and learning block? What about informal chats over coffee? How do you calm students’ statistical software fears over Zoom? Is it possible to keep students engaged when you can’t ‘read the room’ as they get to grips with public mental health research methodology? These were the questions we were grappling with towards the end of 2020 and early in 2021 as we contemplated holding our three-week MPhil student orientation block online for the first time since the start of the programme in 2012.

What 3 things are you hoping to take away from this online block?



Above: Day 1 online poll

Fortunately for us, many brave colleagues at UCT and other higher education institutions had made this leap into the icy waters of emergency remote teaching long before we dipped our toes into that same water. The

Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at UCT provided invaluable assistance in the form of helpful webinars and information, equipping us to explore the tools and tricks of teaching online. Armed with this knowledge, and fuelled by caffeine and a passion for capacity building, we dove in.



Above: Screenshot of some participants attending our protocol presentation morning

The new cohort of MPhil students approached the online marathon with enthusiasm, some trepidation, and a thirst for learning and remote connection. Our lecturers helped students dodge Zoom fatigue by using icebreakers, various online tools, such as Mentimeter and the UCT Vula platform, and by presenting a mixture of lectures, discussions, practical workshops and off-camera writing sessions. Mentimeter, which offers real-time audience interaction, proved particularly useful in keeping students engaged, providing word clouds and other visual representations of students' responses, allowing the audience to view their classmates' entries as well as their own. This functionality came in handy for icebreaker activities, and for reviewing responses to multiple choice questions on the topic being discussed. The MPhil supervisors guided students in developing their outline protocols, creating a supportive atmosphere in the online space, while CPMH support staff showed super-human persistence in assisting with online administrative and technological tasks. These efforts culminated in a successful protocol presentation morning on the 5th of February.

Thankfully, the students benefited from the online block and returned to the online environment two weeks later for a writing course with weekly contact sessions. This group provided positive feedback on the block, have formed their class WhatsApp group for vital postgraduate psychosocial support and continue to meet online as a group for their own writing circle, in addition to the webinars held by CPMH. We can add to the body of (mostly anecdotal but convincing) evidence on the acceptability and feasibility of remote teaching at UCT! 🟩➡️

GOODBYES

By Katherine Sorsdahl

Although we have said 'goodbye' to 2 people at the Alan J Flisher Centre for Public Mental Health (CPMH), fortunately, neither have gone very far physically. Crick Lund is still surfing in Muizenberg (and being a professor of Global Mental Health at King's College London) and Maggie Marx is now at the central Research Office at UCT. They both remain in many ways connected to our Centre.

Crick Lund (right) joined the Division of Public Mental Health as a researcher and worked closely with Prof Alan Flisher during the early 2000s. Together with Alan he was a founding member of the Alan J Flisher Centre for Public Mental Health and served as its first Director, from 2010 to 2017.



Crick has made a significant contribution to global mental health and also put public mental health on the South African agenda. His ground-breaking work on policy development led to the development of norms and standards for mental health care and services in

South Africa. He went on to be at the forefront of country-level mental healthcare planning for low- and middle-income countries, playing leading roles in large multi-country studies testing district mental healthcare plans and interventions integrating mental health into primary healthcare. This work was complemented by extensive work on the social determinants of mental health, and specifically exploring the relationship between poverty and mental health.

In his 7 years as the Director of the Centre, Crick developed a strong vision for the Centre in terms of what we pursue as public mental health research, and played a strong role in capacity building and mentorship. He created a sense of collaboration among staff and beyond through local initiatives and international collaborative networks. The atmosphere at CPMH has always been and continues to be a collegial and supportive one.

Thank you, Crick, for making CPMH what it is and setting the tone for the future of public mental health research and capacity building in Africa.

Maggie Marx (right) is a Communications Specialist who joined CPMH in 2015 as part of the Programme for Improving Mental Health Care (PRIME) project. She quickly made her mark at CPMH and rapidly increased the visibility of CPMH projects.



We saw a massive increase in our media engagements across television, print, radio and social media through her efforts.

Maggie is passionate about mental health research and specifically how research evidence translates into policy. She sees her role as a broker of that knowledge, ensuring research uptake and stakeholder engagement. We are so excited for Maggie in her new position at UCT and look forward to celebrating her future career

and academic success. Thank you for sharing your energy and expertise with us, Maggie! We know that you will play a significant role engaging the public and other stakeholders to bring research, policy and practice into closer alignment in South Africa. ■

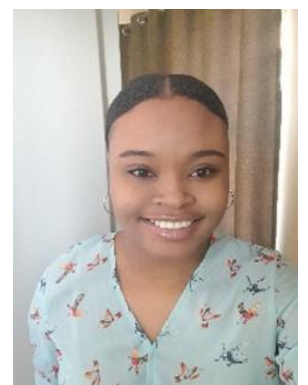
WELCOMES

By Katherine Sorsdahl



The Alan J Flisher Centre for Public Mental Health would like to welcome Mirriam Mkhize and Chesney Ward-Smith, the first two Sue Struengmann Initiative (SSI) PhD Fellows. The purpose of the Initiative is to address the mental health implications of childhood and adolescent adversity and trauma by providing a base for research, capacity building and policy development. This exciting initiative seeks to ensure the provision of high-quality interventions for the prevention and treatment of mental health problems among this vulnerable group.

Mirriam's (right) passion for adolescent health stems from her work experience as a Clinical Social Worker and from being exposed to several research projects on child and adolescent health and wellbeing. Mirriam applied to be a SSI fellow in order to be involved in empowering and capacitating adolescents with skills to better integrate into society regardless of their exposure to adverse life experiences. Her PhD will focus on exploring and responding to the mental health needs of early



adolescents, through formative work and pilot-testing an evidence-based intervention for at-risk adolescents.



Chesney (left) is a Clinical Psychologist with transdisciplinary interests at the intersection of Clinical Psychology, Ecopsychology, Community

Psychology, and Youth-based work. She is passionate about personal, interpersonal, and environmental transformation towards helping people reconnect with themselves and nature in meaningful ways. Chesney applied to be a SSI fellow in order to build an evidence-based foundation in youth mental health intervention praxis. Her PhD will focus on piloting an emotion-regulation intervention for South African adolescents with common mental disorders. ■

THE 2021 LOREN LECLEZIO LECTURE

By Toni Abrahams



Dr Loren Leclezio, was an MSc (Med) Neuroscience student in the department between 2012 and 2014 and a PhD student from 2014 to 2017. She died early in 2018 after a short battle with cancer. Loren was a businesswoman, entrepreneur, academic, mother and wife. And she was a great believer in the power of research to transform communities. She was particularly passionate about the importance of participatory research.

Prof Lionel Green-Thompson, Dean of the Health Sciences Faculty was invited to speak and shared with us his thought provoking presentation “To Whom shall we account”.



Prof Green-Thompson reflected on how we hold stakeholders accountable and how to shorten the gap between ordinary people and the institutions they wish

to hold accountable. He highlighted the challenge in defining community. He shared reflections on his doctoral study focusing on social accountability and medical doctors. He asked us to reflect on how learning should create conscientisation and our responsibility as educators and learning institutions to be open to the teaching and different kinds of knowing that our students bring to us. We have the opportunity to co-create knowledge together with our students and facilitate spaces for communication and telling of different stories that can aid belonging. He also reminded us of the importance of equity underpinning all thinking around global health.

View the video on our Youtube channel “Socially Responsive Mental Health”. [▶](#)

FEATURED NGO: HEALTHCARE WORKERS CARE NETWORK – SUPPORTING FRONTLINE HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING COVID-19



HEALTHCARE WORKERS CARE NETWORK

Caring for the Carers by the Carers

The mental health of Healthcare Workers and Frontline staff have been impacted greatly – and as they gear up for each wave, so the importance of mental health care and support is more crucial than ever.

SADAG is proud to partner with SASOP, SAMA, SASA and PsySSA on the Healthcare Workers Care Network providing free 24/7 mental health care, therapy and training.

Since the launch, the HWCN Helpline has received over 1 000 calls and over 300 online forms from doctors,

nurses, specialists and care workers from across the country.

The HWCN has hosted various webinars and training sessions reaching over 4 400 attendees.



SADAG run dedicated **student helplines**. Available **24 hours a day**, offering **free telephonic counselling**, referrals & info on mental health issues & stressors

0800 747 747


0800 24 25 26

While the country gears up for the next wave, providing support and creating awareness around mental wellness amongst our healthcare workers is something we can all do to help them navigate the next leg of our marathon battle against COVID 19.

Please help share the HWCN number and support services with your local hospital, clinic, doctors' rooms, care home and pharmacy.

The website link is

<https://www.healthcareworkerscarenetwork.org.za/>

If you would like posters to put up, please contact Busi on projects@anxiety.org.za 

WHY HISTORY MATTERS. A SYMPOSIUM EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL RACIAL LEGACIES ON THE FUNCTIONING OF INSTITUTIONS

Convenors: Jon Yako (UCT), Rene Nassen (SU), Wendy Vogel



Why History Matters is such a critical question to ask, particularly at this time when historical racial legacies are being questioned. Our recent history has shown how many of our institutions in the country are haunted by these legacies. Without the process of examining the pasts, we stand the risk of continuing to inflict, conscious or unconscious the same injustices. It is within this process of examination that we begin to create a new collective meaning that moves us forward. When we acknowledge that our institutions are embodiments of a particular racial legacy and that without interrogation, we inherit these histories in their whole form with their traditions and practices. What allows these histories to permeate through decades is simply because, unlike regime change, history and knowledge does not change when leaders change hands, unless deliberately interrogated.

The symposium marks a milestone for the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health and the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town. It is the beginning of many conversations that are planned under our Transformation activities. The purpose of the current symposium is to interrogate the impact of historical legacies, such as that of Dr Vera Bührmann and how these legacies impact the functioning of institutions in our current world. Another important question to ask is how we reconcile varying positions that are in conflict with regards to our identities. Its core purposes is to bring to thought unembodied legacies. Language remains the only tool we have at our disposal to navigate our way.

A number of exciting speakers were organized to offer their insights on the topic of racial legacies and the functioning of institutions. The symposium began with our first keynote speaker, Mr. Andre Landman, who presented his thesis entitled *From Volks Moeder to Uqira: A biographical sketch of Vera Bührmann*. The thesis offers interesting insight into the dual positions that Vera held, that of being the founder of the South African Jungian Analytic Society and the Founder of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the province and on the other hand having strong associations with an ultra-right-wing organization. It is the tension within this duality that the writer and the audience must grapple with. This presentation was followed by a response from Professor Astrid Berg and Professor Sally Swartz whose talk was entitled *Liabile to inherit: Thinking through disciplinary legacies*. Professor Sally Swartz took us through an interesting talk that looks at the history of Anthropology and Psychoanalysis and how these disciplines contributed to dehumanizing certain races.

The second keynote address was presented by Professor Jonathan Jansen whose talk was entitled: *The institutional fingerprints of racial science in the medical sciences in South Africa*. Professor Jansen primarily focused on the history of racial science and the production of knowledge within our institutions. He

argued that there is a history of racially biased thinking in the medical and social sciences. Continued dialogue about our difficult pasts is the only way of creating new meaning for all rather than deal with the past as we often do, with silences.

The second half of the symposium involved a panel discussion by our four panelists, Professor Whabie Long, Judge Denis Davis, Professor Steven Robin and Professor Bonga Chiliza. The panel discussion examined racism in institutions; looked at how transgenerational racism is transmitted either consciously or unconsciously in institutions. A number of important questions were raised for discussion such as how do revered leaders perpetuate this? How does this contribute to ongoing marginalization of certain groups? How do we break these cycles? How do we deal with complexities of identities? How do we reconcile different identities in ourselves and others? ■

STUDENT PSYCHIATRY SOCIETY UPDATE

By Ian Olivier and Jessica Andras



With great enthusiasm but little certainty of what was to come, the 2021 UCT Student Psychiatry Society Committee began preparations for the academic year. Acknowledging the benefits of hosting online activities (such as having greater reach and accessibility), we completed our transition to the digital platform.

The year started off with a virtual plaza forum in February, rather than the usual plaza day at the Faculty of Health Sciences. For this, a video was made to provide a better idea of what the society is about and what it has to offer (this was of course a feeble attempt

to replace the usual attraction of iced coffee served to interested prospective members).

The first event of the year was an online discussion on Autism Spectrum Disorder, organised with UCT PaedSoc, as part of World Autism Awareness Day on the 2nd of April 2021. The speakers included Prof Petrus de Vries, Sue Struengmann Professor of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and founding director of the Centre for Autism Research in Africa (CARA), as well as Dr Moodley (senior registrar in developmental paediatrics at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital). Both Prof de Vries and Dr Moodley provided fascinating insights into this topic, and the discussion/Q&A proved to be extremely informative and eye-opening, which showed how interactive and gripping such events can be – even on a purely digital platform.



The latest event hosted and organised by the society (in collaboration with SCORA) was an online talk entitled “Transgender Mental Health and being a Trans-friendly Healthcare Provider”, presented by Dr Pickstone-Taylor, a child and adolescent psychiatrist with a special interest Gender Diversity in young people. In 2012, he started the Gender Identity Development Service within Red Cross Hospital and UCT’s Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. In this talk, he provided an overview on transgender health and mental health in general, carefully and sensitively addressing some difficult issues that frequently arise in this context, and emphasising the importance of a supportive family structure.



In addition, the society was to host a talk entitled “When are women especially vulnerable to mental health disorders?”, given by Dr Gordon, Head of Undergraduate Teaching in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at UCT. This talk has been rescheduled for the second half of the year.

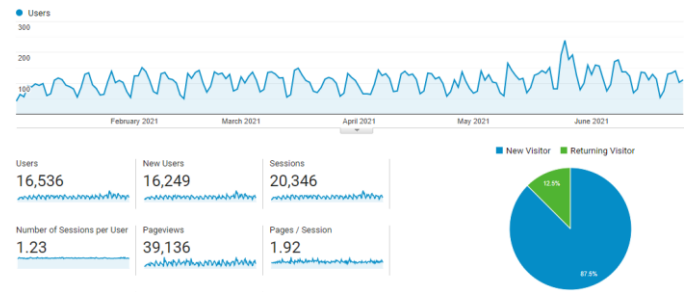
Furthermore, the society has planned some workshops in July on depression (recognising it in oneself and others and how to provide support), and anxiety, stress and burnout (and associated stressors). This will be a collaboration with SHAWCO, with Dr Henderson as the host.

Looking forward, we are hoping to host more online talks and begin hosting in-person events once more. Currently, we are focussing on growing our social media presence and ensuring the smooth-running of our online events. We can be found on Facebook (www.facebook.com/studentpsychsoc) and Instagram (@uctpsychsoc).

If you would like to get involved with the UCT Student Psychiatry society, please email us at uctpsychsoc@gmail.com.

The 2021 committee consists of Ian Olivier (co-chair) and Jessica Andras (co-chair and treasurer), Sarah Lay (Secretary), Jess Stegen, and Julia Dibakwane (Outreach). The society receives mentorship from Dr Terri Henderson and Prof Dan Stein. ■▶

HOW IS OUR WEBSITE FARING?



As shown in the graphics above, our website has seen mostly new visitors to the site from January to June 2021, specifically 16,249 new users. This is an increase from the previous period. We are of course always happy to have new users visiting our site! A total of 16,536 users have had more than 20,000 sessions with a total of over 39,000 page views in this period. We hope the website continues to be a useful source of information to those who access it. If there are any queries or you would like to add/change anything to the website you are most welcome to contact [John-Joe Dawson-Squibb](#) or [Deirdre Pieterse](#). ■▶

PASS STAFF NEWS – VIRTUAL TEAM BUILDING

By Sandra Swart, Shuretta Thomas and Nikita Titus

Our GOB PASS staff held a virtual team building on Friday 4 June. We considered a face-to-face team building but decided against it considering the possibility of a 3rd covid-19 wave. The main purpose was to check in with members and to continue keeping the contact despite the challenges of having to social distance. The event also coincided with the “happy socks” day and each member could show off theirs. We also wore black and orange in support of mental health awareness.



We started the event off with a mindfulness “check in” by using the mindfulness blob tree for members to identify where they find themselves on the tree. Members shared freely and it was quite amazing and at the same time concerning, that so many of us found ourselves at the lower end of the tree. Many have faced and are still facing many Covid-related challenges.



This was followed by a 30 seconds’ virtual game, which was led by Nikita Titus, which proved to be lots of fun.

We were split into 2 teams and questions were sent via the Zoom chat.

We ended off the event by exchanging gifts. Each member bought a gift for a specific person and revealed the gift and the recipient on Zoom.

The afternoon was well spent, and it was clear to us that everyone needed this interaction. We are planning to hold follow up Zoom interactions to enable staff to give vent to emotions and frustrations.

IN MEMORIAM: PROF JULIAN LEFF

By Toni Abrahams



Sadly, on 23rd February 2021, Prof Julian Leff passed away at the age of 82 years. Prof Leff was an emeritus professor in the department. He was prominently known for his innovative work as a psychiatrist in the treatment of schizophrenia, where he pioneered group and individual sessions with patients, and his classic research and work on expressed emotion to prevent relapse. Post retirement, he invented the highly effective avatar therapy, in which patient’s create computer avatars of their auditory hallucinations to be able to engage with the voices.

Prof Leff was born in Kentish Town in London to Sam and Vera, both activists and authors. His own family history is said to have driven his career in which family, heritage, migration and culture were key. He studied

medicine at University College London medical school. He worked at the Institute of Psychiatry at the Maudsley Hospital as professor of social and cultural psychiatry and director the Medical Research Council's social and community psychiatric unit. He was a prolific writer and received multiple awards including the Pelicier lifetime achievement award in 2017.

Described as “one of the most creative psychiatrists of his generation” in the British Medical Journal, Prof Leff was creative far beyond the scope of psychiatry, studying silk screening, ceramics, sculpture, silver smithing, playing piano and singing in choirs. He was also described as “a quiet, friendly modest man in social settings but an eloquent and powerful communicator and teacher when lecturing” by Brian Martindale from the International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis.

Prof Leff leaves behind his second wife Joan Raphael-Leff and their children, Jessa, Jonty, Adriel and Alex. 🟩➡️

GOODBYE TO STAFF

We bid farewell to Bradley Knight, clinical psychologist who was based at Valkenberg's outpatient department and a highly valued member of the social responsiveness committee and division of psychotherapy. We wish him well for the future.

We also say goodbye to Dr Kate Mawson who has moved to Tygerberg Hospital/Stellenbosch University to head up the Eating Disorders unit and Dr Nisaar Dawood. Both worked tirelessly on the frontlines in district services and were (and will remain) champions for patients in the community. We thank them for their efforts and wish them well for their next endeavours. 🟩➡️

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Drs Idorenyin Akpabio, Sybrand de Waal, E.J. Smith, Imraan Tayob, Jasper van Zyl, Elizabeth Vogts and Allanah Wilson who have been successful in

passing their FC Psych(SA) Part II exit examinations. We wish them well with their future career plans.

To Mirriam Mkhize and Simphiwe Simelane on being selected for the Faculty of Health Sciences accelerated transformation programme. This program aims to identify and nurture highly talented black South African students, and to support them with mentoring throughout their higher degrees and towards meaningful academic careers. Selection is competitive, and we are delighted that two members of the department were selected. Simphiwe Simelane is doing her PhD with Petrus de Vries in DCAP, while Mirriam Mkhize is doing her PhD with Katherine Sorsdahl in the Division of Public Mental Health. We wish them every success for their studies. 🟩➡️

LIGHTMIND

