

EMORY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES KUDOS
FEBRUARY 2024

REMEMBER

Please send me your accomplishments, program/team activities, and personal updates for the March 2024 Kudos

SAVE THE DATES

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS

Upcoming faculty development seminars, which will be held from 9:00-10:30a, [Zoom](#) link:

- Wednesday March 6, 2024 – Giving Feedback: Faculty Perspective
- Wednesday May 22, 2024 – Promotion: DEI Section of CV, Service Portfolio

WRITING GROUPS: UPCOMING

The Writing Group is the 1st Wednesday of every month from 8:00-9:00am. These meetings are on [Zoom](#).

SPOTLIGHTS

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Viorica Pencea

Viorica Pencea currently works at the Atlanta VA Medical Center as Medical Director of Acute Mental Health (MH). Acute MH includes the inpatient MH Unit, Psychiatric Emergency Department team and Front Door Clinic (a walk-in/bridge mental health clinic for Veterans that are not assigned to an outpatient MH team). She serves as an assistant professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences – Assistant Professor, Distinguished Physician, as well as Instructor for the Hospital Transitions/Patient Flow Academy VHA National Improvement Office. She is a member of several committees, including VA Facility Flow Committee, VA Performance Improvement Committee, Emory Psychiatry Faculty Development Committee and Emory Psychiatry Women's Faculty Development Committee.

Viorica's roles and responsibilities outside of Emory include a volunteer faculty appointment at Morehouse University Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. She is also a fellow member with the American Psychiatric Association.

What Viorica most enjoys about work includes patient care, ranging from striving to improve the care she personally provides to her patients to improving healthcare systems. She also enjoys education, not only by working on curriculum, providing lectures and resident supervision, but also by sharing her on-going need for education on a broad spectrum of topics. The rapid progress and turmoil in our society and other societies demand a broadened education in order to be able to mentor future generations. She finds this challenge very exciting and rewarding.

Key highlights of Viorica's career include an Emory postdoctoral fellowship resulting in several important publications. She is very excited about one of her publications "[Infusion of Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor into the Lateral Ventricle of the Adult Rat Leads to New Neurons in the Parenchyma of the Striatum, Septum, Thalamus, and Hypothalamus](#)" reaching 964 citations. She completed her Psychiatry Residency and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Residency at Emory. Besides providing her high-quality education, these five years allowed her to thrive as a young psychiatrist and create life-long bonds. Working at Atlanta VA continues to give Viorica unique opportunities allowing her to improve herself as a physician, educator, mentor and leader. Ongoing involvement with Emory University has also allowed her to try and give back to a program that nurtured the beginnings of her career.

Viorica's goals and plans for the future include continuing to discover and share the beauty of discovery with others. She also looks to improve her skills as a physician, mentor, co-worker, leader and last, but not least, human being.

Outside of the workplace, Viorica enjoys spending time with family and friends. She also enjoys traveling, most recently traveling to Romania, while attempting to rediscover her roots. Painting allows her to enter a world in which every storm can become beauty. Spirituality is important to her, learning how spirituality has shaped and is continuing to shape humanity.

ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Laura Westen

It has been Laura Westen's privilege to be affiliated with the Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences as an Adjunct faculty member since 2004. In addition to Laura's private practice where she conducts psychotherapy and psychoanalysis with adults of all ages, she has supervised psychiatric residents and Emory University Psychoanalytic Institute (EUPI) candidates in psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

Laura completed her own psychoanalytic training at EUPI and is a Training and Supervising Analyst. Currently, she chairs the TSA Committee and the Colloquium Committee. Most recently she has co-taught Assessment and Analyzability along with her treasured colleague Sybil Ginsburg.

Laura has been honored to accept the role of Vice Chair of the Certification Committee of the American Board of Psychoanalysis (ABPsa). The mission of ABPsa is to provide an opportunity for national certification in adult and child/adolescent psychoanalysis utilizing core competencies of psychoanalytic theory and practice. She is excited about the rollout of their new competencies, which have been heavily researched and recently adapted to incorporate essential attention to considerations of ethnicity, race and gender.

From both sides of the couch, Laura has learned psychoanalysis is truly life changing in ways that are quite different from other types of treatments. She is particularly excited about being involved in training the next generation of psychoanalytic psychotherapists

and psychoanalysts, and is most grateful for the opportunity to keep learning from her patients.

TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT: Desiree Frain

Desiree Frain is a postdoctoral resident in Grady's outpatient behavioral health clinic, working predominantly with adults with serious psychiatric illnesses. She also assists in coordinating the Action in Recovery clinic and practicum program alongside Erica Marshall-Lee, as well as coordinates the cognitive-behavioral social skills training (CBSST) program alongside Keith Wood. She supervises/trains students in these programs, engages in direct clinical care and program development activities. Outside of Emory, Desiree is an adjunct professor at Mercer University, and the annual meeting chair for the Georgia Psychological Association.

What Desiree most enjoys about her work is supervising and mentoring students. Getting to see them develop their skills and confidence is incredibly rewarding.

Key highlights of Desiree's career trajectory include the opportunity to adjunct teach in a doctoral program, as well as getting fully licensed last year. She is also proud of getting multiple advocacy-focused blogs published on Psychology Today. Getting to see students accomplish their goals after finishing their training at Grady/Emory has also been a highlight.

Looking to the future, Desiree hopes to continue being involved in training and development of future mental health professionals with a clinical focus on severe mental illness from a social justice informed perspective. She is planning on staying in Atlanta, while still exploring opportunities.

Outside of work, Desiree is a big video gamer, loves doing every possible craft you could think of and staying up to date with pop culture. She also loves spending time with her husband and Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Obi!

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Transplant Behavioral Health Team

The Transplant Behavioral Health Program (TBHP) is a comprehensive program designed to support solid organ transplant candidates, recipients and living donors throughout their transplant journey. This program focuses on providing specialized mental health services to address the unique psychological and emotional needs associated with organ transplantation. They provide many services throughout each transplant phase, including pre-surgical psychological assessment, individual and group psychotherapy and psychiatric medication management. Finally, they collaborate with the transplant physicians, surgeons, nurses, social workers and other healthcare professionals involved in the transplant process to provide comprehensive, coordinated care.

Organ transplantation is a complex medical procedure associated with significant psychological challenges and comes with many uncertainties. The process of waiting for

a transplant, undergoing surgery and adjusting to life post-transplant is demanding for patients and their caregivers. The physical toll, psychological impact, financial burden and necessary lifestyle changes associated with transplant can lead to anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. The TBHP was developed to promote the mental health and well-being of transplant candidates, recipients and living donors through the provision of integrated, evidence-based services. By addressing the psychological aspects of transplantation, the TBHP seeks to promote better outcomes, improve quality of life and support long-term adjustment and recovery.

The TBHP is one of a select few transplant centers with a standalone behavioral health service offering a comprehensive array of behavioral health assessments and treatments for the five solid organ groups, living donors and VAD patients throughout all phases of transplant. The presence and composition of behavioral health providers varies widely across programs, and Emory TBHP is an exemplary model of integrating behavioral health services within a large transplant center.

The TBHP team is composed of highly specialized providers including two clinical health psychologists, three part-time psychiatrists and a licensed clinical social worker. Kandi Schmidt, the Director of the Transplant Behavioral Health program, is a clinical health psychologist who started building the TBHP when she joined Emory in 2017. Raymond Young, the experienced transplant psychiatrist on the team, has been a guiding force behind the scenes, nurturing the program's growth and development. Kristin Smith is the mental health social worker who tirelessly assesses vulnerable and complex inpatient candidates, supports the team with case management services and provides outpatient therapy. Joseph Vinson and Michael Lucido are truly exceptional psychiatrists who cultivate the collaborative nature of the team. Carissa Balderas, a clinical health psychologist, is an indispensable member of the team who has been essential to the development of much-needed group services for VAD and lung transplant patients. Administratively, TBHP has a program administrator, Jon Perry, who facilitates the administrative integration of services within transplant. Additionally, they are grateful to have two patient care coordinators, Channing Davis and Veronica Leonard, who coordinate services in the context of the patient's demanding schedules.

Due to the complexity of organ transplantation and the diverse needs of transplant patients, transplant medicine involves a multidisciplinary team of healthcare providers. The TBHP team collaborates with physicians and healthcare staff throughout the school of medicine to provide comprehensive specialized care for transplant recipients. They actively participate in multidisciplinary transplant selection committees where potential candidates are reviewed to determine their eligibility for organ transplantation. The program also collaborates with the organ program administrators and physician leaders to develop specialized selection and intervention protocols to address unique patient needs throughout each phase of the transplant process.

Many may not be aware of the role of the TBHP's team in the evaluation and support of living donors. Emory has two distinct living donor programs, kidney and liver, and their

providers play a critical role in evaluating candidates for living donation. There are unique psychological and ethical factors that must be considered when determining whether a candidate is appropriate for living donation, specifically in regards to making an informed decision and being mentally prepared for the emotional complexities of donation. Post-donation, the program offers support to assist donors in navigating the physical and emotional challenges that may arise.

The easiest way to learn more about the TBHP is to [email](#) the program's director, Kandi Schmidt.

WELLNESS COMMITTEE

Wellness Resources:

Healthy Emory is bringing back the [Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less](#) program in September.

Challenges with Healthy Emory are ongoing - the Sharecare app is the platform and incentive dollars are available!

[Operation Eat Right](#) encourages you to improve your nutrition and boost your well-being using Healthy Emory Connect!

Resources from Healthy Emory and a link below to the ACPH.

- [Benefits](#)
- [Rewards](#)
- [Career](#)
- [Learning](#)
- [Wellness](#)
- [Work Life](#)
- [Employee Assistance](#)
- [Employee Assistance – Physician Wellbeing Conference](#)

Healthy Emory resources including the Sharecare platform for Move More, Refresh from Stress and more! Open to University and Healthcare Employees [Healthy Emory Connect | Emory University | Atlanta GA](#)

Wellbeing and mental health support for Emory University Employees [Faculty Staff Assistance Program](#) and for [Emory Healthcare Employees](#) username EHC (800 327 2251)

Graduate Medical Education Well-being [Resident Well Being | Emory School of Medicine](#)

International Conference on Physician Health (alternates years with American Conference) [International Conference on Physician Health™ | American Medical Association \(ama-assn.org\)](#)

[Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation | Dedicated to Protecting the Well-Being of Physicians and Health Care Professionals \(drlornabreen.org\)](http://drlornabreen.org)

Office of Well-Being established for Woodruff Health Sciences [Emory's Woodruff Health Sciences Center establishes Office of Well-Being | Emory University | Atlanta GA](#)

DISC COMMITTEE

Getting to know you! – Shethal Reddy, Assistant Professor

Please share a fun fact about you related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- I have attended the Atlanta Pride Parade almost every year for the last 10 years! It used to be just me and my sister, but eventually grew to include parents, significant others and kids. This year our group included my sister and her wife, their 4-month old daughter, our two kids, my husband and my sister- and brother-in-law. We look forward to it every year!

Please share a celebration important for you/your family's identity and/or a favorite/personally meaningful celebration in your identity and upbringing

- At Thanksgiving, my husband's uncle created a tradition that we go around the table and everyone talks about what they are thankful for. Everyone from the oldest to youngest has to participate. It's something that we have kept up even if his uncle isn't there. It's a great way to teach children gratitude and appreciation.

Please share a microaggression you have witnessed or experienced, how it impacted you or others, and how you/they coped.

- Thinking of one is too hard when there are so many! The most common microaggression I received was about my "diction" and how well I spoke and wrote, with most people assuming I was foreign-born. Even that was a misinformed stereotype since there are so many foreign-born that speak better English than those of us born in the United States! I often use wit to get around awkward situations like these. I would thank them for the compliment and explain that I attended public schools in rural South Georgia so it truly is a surprise that I speak so well! That usually leaves them not knowing what to say.

Please share a clinical encounter related to a particular holiday/celebration in which you learned something related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

- When I was at CHOA, I worked in the Strong4Life Clinic that deals with pediatric obesity and eating habits more generally. We had several families of Muslim faith that were teaching their children how to fast for Ramadan. I had never thought about how parents pass on these customs. I was struck by the conviction and devotion that parents were passing along combined with understanding and compassion that their kids would have to modify their fasts until they were a little older to assume the full fast. It also challenges us as a team clinically to apply our Western-based practices in a culturally compatible way.

Given your intersectionalities, please share your point of view as you encounter the world/what do you want people to know (consider) about your unique point of view (frame of reference).

- I am a cis gender South Asian American female that grew up in south Georgia in a privileged and educated family. For a long time, I grew up disliking the south, it's racist past, and what I perceived as a lack of culture and sophistication. I was very happy to leave. As I've matured, I've realized that there are parts of my identity that I like that are very much a product of growing up as I did. My intersectionality means that I feel like I always know what it's like to not fit in. I was always not "American/White/Hindu/Indian/Sophisticated/Educated/Cultural enough depending on which group you compared me to. Having grown up in Georgia, I empathize with patients who can't relate to providers who living the big city of Atlanta or hail from some other big city or foreign county. While I come from a family of physicians, as a student, I was made acutely aware that I am not one. There was little value placed on other degrees, so accomplishments were not always recognized. Unfortunate, yes, but life has taught me that you have to be self-assured. Waiting for others' recognition of your accomplishments is a sure route to disappointment. The one consistent piece of my upbringing has been my interest and education in Eastern philosophies, mostly Hinduism, but Buddhism-based mindfulness in my clinical training. It's the one piece that has remained a constant and I find that the teachings of nonjudgement, compassion, and equanimity have helped me navigate many of these intersectionalities. Humbleness and a sense of appreciation for all of the experiences I've had.

What types of adjustments to professional activities have arisen due to your diversity status (addressing identity differences with patients)/professional interests/efforts specifically sought in areas of teaching, service, Inclusion service, or clinical work as a result of your diversity status or commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work.

- I'm much more open in speaking about race and power differentials in the healthcare setting. I'm also making more efforts on my own time to read and educate myself about the experiences of BIPOC community as it related to my field.

How has your diversity status has helped you develop greater resilience?

- Anytime you are in the minority you're at risk for being ignored, disrespected, or silenced. In some ways, your very existence is a challenge to the system. And to realize that can help build resistance.

FACULTY KUDOS

Major Leadership Appointments, Activities and Achievements

Rachel Hershenberg (1) began her term as President of the American Psychological Association's Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology and (2) will be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor effective September 2024.

Jessica Maples-Keller will be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor effective September 2024.

Research

Lewis PC, Kaslow NJ, Cheong YF, Evans DP, & Yount KM. (in press). Femicide in the United States: A call for legal codification and national surveillance. *Frontiers in Public Health*, (12), 1338548. DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2024.1338548

Palitsky R, Chen ZJ, Rentscher K, Friedman SE, Wilson DT, Ruiz JM, Sullivan D, Grant GH, O'Connor M-F. (2023) [Associations of religious and existential variables with psychosocial factors and biomarkers of cardiovascular risk in bereavement](#). *Aging Cell*.

Palitsky R, Kaplan DM, Peacock C, Zarrabi AJ, Maples-Keller JL, Grant GH, Dunlop B W, & Raison CL. (2023). [Importance of Integrating Spiritual, Existential, Religious and Theological Components in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies](#). *JAMA Psychiatry*, 80(7), 743–749.

Palitsky R, Lyons MJ, Kaplan DM. (2023). [Beyond hub and spoke adaptation: religiously and culturally responsive implementation of mindfulness for global public health](#). *Mindfulness*.

Palitsky R, Wilson DT, Friedman SE, Ruiz JM, Sullivan D, & O'Connor M-F. (2023). [The Relationship of Prolonged Grief Disorder Symptoms with Hemodynamic Response to Grief Recall Among Bereaved Adults](#). *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 85(6), 545.

Peacock C, Mascaro JS, Bauer E, Zarrabi AJ, Dunlop BW, Maples-Keller JL, Grant G H, Raison CL, Rab F, Palitsky R. (2024) [Spiritual health practitioners' contributions to psychedelic assisted therapy: a qualitative analysis](#). *PLoS One*.

Rauch SAM, Venners MR, Ragin C, Ruhe G, Lamp KE, Burton M, Pomerantz A, Bernardy N, Schnurr PP, Hamblen JL, Possemato K, Sripada R, Wray LO, Dollar K, Wade M, Astin MC, & Cigrang JA. (2023). [Treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder with prolonged exposure for primary care \(PE-PC\): Effectiveness and patient and therapist factors related to symptom change and retention](#). *Psychological Services*, 20(4), 745–755.

Honors, Awards, Rankings

Monique Hunter obtained her board certification in Clinical Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology.

Nadine Kaslow obtained her board certification in Serious Mental Illness through the American Board of Professional Psychology.

Rachel Waford received funding from Resilient Georgia to work on a statewide project with the 22 Community Service Boards (CSBs) to conduct a mixed methods study that will lead to actionable solutions designed to enhance CSBs' ability to meet the growing

demand of behavioral health services for Georgia residents in collaboration with Julie Gazmararian.

Naadira Upshaw obtained her board certification in Clinical Health Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology.

Presentations

Nadine Kaslow gave the Karasu Leadership Lecture at Yale University School of Medicine.

The following faculty presented at the Society of Clinical Psychology's Inaugural Conference: The Future of Clinical Psychological Science"

- Jordan Cattie, Rachel Hershenberg, Devon LoParo, and Andrew Sherrill were recognized as "institute awardees" at the annual conference of Society of Clinical Psychology.
- Andrew Sherrill gave an oral presentation on "Learning psychotherapy with AI teammates: Promises and perils" at the annual conference of Society of Clinical Psychology.
- Rachel Hershenberg joined a panel discussion on "Developing and Implementing APA's Clinical Practice Guidelines: What's Next?" at the annual conference of Society of Clinical Psychology.
- Nadine Kaslow participated in the mentor panel at the pre-conference institute of the annual conference of Society of Clinical Psychology.
- Barbara Rothbaum presented a keynote address on "Innovations in the Treatment of PTSD" at the annual conference of Society of Clinical Psychology.

Robert Cotes, Justin Palanci and David Goldsmith served as panelists on Optimizing Care for People with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders at the GPPA Winter Meeting.

Geoff Goodmann **(1)** Goodman G. God is our refuge: *Transforming attachment to the living God*. Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Atlanta, GA, 2024 **(2)** Goodman G. (2024, March). *Stephen Ministry: Carrying each other's burdens*. Paper presented at the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Atlanta, GA. (poster) **(3)** Dent V, Goodman G, Morejon A, Ottolin T, Simpson M, & Sutherland J. (2024, June). *Using machine learning to explore Ugandan children's school readiness*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Psychotherapy Research, Ottawa, Canada. (oral) **(4)** Fleming D, Goodman G, & Dent V. (2024, June). Relationship among caregivers' storytelling content relevance and attachment in rural Ugandan preschoolers. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Psychotherapy Research, Ottawa, Canada. (oral) **(5)** Goodman G, Dent V, & Coşkun A. (2024, June). *Ugandan caregivers' content relevance and mental state talk as predictors of preschool children's mental state talk*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Psychotherapy Research, Ottawa, Canada. (oral)

Education

Jeffrey Rakofsky presented a workshop at the AADPRT annual meeting called, "Bias in Letters of Recommendation: Are Standardized Letters the Solution?"

ADJUNCT FACULTY KUDOS

Betsy Gard (1) Red Cross - [Fostering Fortitude: Advocacy for Mental Wellness in Crises.](#)

Sanjay Shah participated in an [Emory-hosted event to build collaboration between mental health, public safety professionals.](#)

Deb Simkin was promoted to the rank of Adjunct Associate Professor.

Watson-Singleton NN, and Pennefather J. (available online). Using a randomized clinical trial to test the efficacy of a culturally responsive mobile health application in African Americans. *Behavior Therapy*.

Laura Westen was promoted to the rank of Adjunct Associate Professor.

Zhang S, Liu DY, Bai J, Fun J-C, Jiang F, Nehl E, Liu H, Liu Y, Zhang C, Tang Y-L, & Kaslow NJ. (2024). Psychological effects of trauma, negative and positive coping, resilience, and psychological distress among Chinese healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Mood and Anxiety Disorders*, (5), 100046. doi: 10.1016/j.xjmad.2023.100046

TRAINEE KUDOS

The chief residents for 2024-25 have been announced and include: Eric Galante, Alejandra Grullón, Daeja Hamm, Mackenzie Jones, Mary Margaret Lavigne, Lindsey Limbaugh, Michael McGrath, Patrick O'Connell, Najeah Okashah, Punita Peketi and Caitlin Smith.