



Michael J. Dunn, MD

Outreach program extends reach of mental health knowledge

Michael J. Dunn, MD, Dean and Executive Vice President,
Medical College of Wisconsin

The Medical College of Wisconsin is forming a conduit for transferring our expertise in neuropsychiatric disorders to the community. We aim to improve outcomes for the one in five Americans who will experience a significant episode of mental illness at some point in his or her life.

The College's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine is undertaking a number of new activities, including the new Health Outreach, Partnering and Education (HOPE) Initiative, to expand the knowledge of health professionals and lay individuals by connecting them with valuable resources. The HOPE Initiative provides education in mental health to two primary audiences: health professionals throughout urban and rural areas of Wisconsin; and the public, including clients of mental health services in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Mental illnesses and related conditions such as addictive disorders are significant public health issues for the United States in general, and Wisconsin in particular. Among economically established countries, neuropsychiatric disorders are the leading cause of disability. Major depression and suicide in particular are among the top causes of disability for men and women in the United States, and suicide is the

10th leading cause of death in Wisconsin.

Fortunately, many mental illnesses and addictive disorders are amenable to treatment and have outcomes better than most chronic physical disorders. Obstacles to care such as stigma, limited access, and insufficient expertise of multidisciplinary professionals, however, prevent many of these illnesses from being diagnosed.

The HOPE Initiative will be positioned to dissolve some of these obstacles. Faculty, led by Laura Roberts, MD, Professor and Chair of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, will soon perform a systematic assessment of educational interests and needs related to mental illness and related conditions as perceived by health professionals, community members, and patients in Wisconsin. The results will be used to develop creative educational outreach services responsive to both professionals and lay audiences.

Distance learning will become a major component of the HOPE Initiative, enabling Medical College faculty to train peers throughout the state via Web-based learning and video-conferencing technology. Rural clinicians, who have reduced access to information, consultation, and educational support, may especially benefit from this method.

Working with the Medical College's Office of Continuing and Professional Education, the Initiative is pursuing distance learning contracts with key partners in rural Wisconsin, allowing for videostreaming of grand rounds and other faculty projects or presentations. The efforts will target evidence-based clinical approaches to the prevention, diagnosis, and optimal treatment of mental illnesses and related disorders, as well as public health and policy issues.

For those seeking more direct contact, the HOPE Initiative features a physical office space, open to the public, to foster better relations and to support education for health professionals and community members. We envision teachers, civic organizations, and other community leaders utilizing the office's resources to raise further awareness of mental illnesses and available treatments.

The College's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine has long placed a premium on sharing knowledge and expanding the skill sets of fellow mental health professionals. This summer marked the 18th year that we have presented the Door County Summer Institute.

Featuring three weeks of CME-accredited seminars, the Summer Institute draws more than 300 psy-

chiatrists, psychologists, physicians, social workers, nurses, and other health professionals to Egg Harbor. Directed by Carlyle H. Chan, MD, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, the Summer Institute links the latest mental health information with practitioners on the front lines of patient care.

In addition to disseminating insight in the field, our Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine has recently recruited several new faculty with diverse subspecialty expertise and valuable new skills to enhance our ability to provide state-of-the art clinical care, create new multidisciplinary professional education initiatives, and perform research.

Our recent addition of Russell E. Scheffer, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, for example, has greatly enhanced research efforts in child and adolescent psychiatry. Although mental illness affects 10 to 20 percent of all children and adolescents, these conditions have re-

ceived little careful study. Medication use is often extrapolated from adult studies, a flawed technique since the effectiveness and side effects can differ greatly between the age groups.

Doctor Scheffer's research group is studying a number of pharmacological treatments for bipolar and psychotic disorders specifically in children and adolescents, and is also collecting longitudinal data on children and adolescents who experience prepubertal onset of mental illnesses for inclusion in a clinical registry. The registry will allow College researchers to observe the stability of diagnoses over time, the course of illnesses, and their treatment responses. The registry focuses on, but is not limited to, bipolar and psychotic disorders.

These efforts complement other valuable research activities underway in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine.

Directed by Jeffrey Kelly, PhD, and funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the Center for AIDS Intervention

Research conducts and evaluates HIV prevention programs in high-risk populations in Wisconsin and 90 other countries. The Center has documented success in changing behaviors and thereby reducing HIV transmission and development of AIDS.

Doctor Roberts leads NIH-funded research projects that focus on ethical issues in clinical care in rural areas and in clinical research involving persons with serious illnesses such as mental illness, cancer, diabetes, HIV and addictive disorders. She recently received a grant from the Department of Energy to study ethical issues in the use of genetic and health data in the workplace.

The results of these diverse research efforts will more sharply define the best treatment options for adults, children and adolescents with mental health, addiction, and complex medical and psychiatric conditions. And innovative education initiatives at the Medical College ensure this new knowledge will reach health professionals who can use it to better heal their patients.

Wisconsin Medical Society presents these exciting trips from Madison and Chicago. (Other departure cities are available.)



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