

# Clinical Psychology Training Programs

## Training Leadership

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2020-2021 Training Year

March, 2021

## Updates from the Training Director



It's hard to believe that it has been 12 months since the pandemic disrupted our lives so completely. I am truly grateful for the incredible resilience and flexibility of the trainees, faculty, staff, mentors and leaders who stayed engaged and ensured our training program thrived during the past year of COVID-19. With their creativity and assistance, we had incredibly successful (zoom) recruitment and match days for both the internship and postdoctoral fellowship. We received terrific feedback from applicants in both programs – about our engaging video ‘tours’ (thank you Dan,

Jenna and Becca!), trainee and faculty warmth and commitment to training, and the informative and organized nature of interview days that prioritized the applicant’s experience. We are thrilled with our matches! We will welcome 8 highly qualified psychology interns and 7 talented fellows to our program in August.

One unique feature of the internship, that sets our program apart from other programs, is the Leadership Project. It offers an opportunity for trainees to contribute to the missions of the department, interact with other staff and faculty, and develop administrative and leadership skills in addition to the standard clinical activities. I want to acknowledge the ‘value added’ that these projects bring to the department and the critical importance of the men-

tors who work with interns over the year. Seven of the current projects are featured on the following pages. Check them out!

We are excited to launch a new column in the newsletter. “Where are They Now?” features alum from the training program – we love to stay in touch with graduates and learn how their careers have unfolded. The inaugural column features Dr. Tim LaVigne (Internship, 16-17) and Dr. Elyse Rosenberg (Internship, 17-18), and their sweetest ‘collaboration’, Leah.

Finally, I hope that you and everyone you care about are well and healthy. I think I see a light on the horizon.

Fondly,  
~Wendi Cross, PhD

## Internship Program Leadership Projects

The internship offers a leadership opportunity for interns to make meaningful contributions to the Department's clinical and education missions and/or agencies in the broader community. Leadership Projects aim to enhance interns' understanding of complex issues facing a clinical service or education program, expose interns to the scope and depth of the functioning of psychologists in a medical center, and expand ideas regarding the contributions that psychologists can make. At the conclusion of the training year, interns present a poster about their project at the Trainee Poster Day in June.

### Integration of Psychological Services for Patients with Burns and Medical Trauma: Assessing Needs

**Sonia Altavilla, MS, MA**  
**Rae Drach, MA**



Patients served by the URMC Kessler Burn and Trauma Center encounter a number of psychosocial challenges along the recovery pathway, including pain control, behavioral issues, trauma responses, and adaptation to injury/new disability. The timing of when to integrate psychological services into the care plan is often a key consideration for successful transition and outcomes. Under the supervision of **Dr. Lauren DeCaporale-Ryan** and **Dr. Renee Madathil**, this needs assessment will increase our understanding of how an embedded psychologist in the Kessler Center could improve patient care and outcomes by promoting a biopsychosocial framework for intervention and interdisciplinary support to the healthcare team. Through semi-structured interviews with care team members and retrospective analyses of patient data, we will better understand provider and patient experiences and identify opportunities for more direct psychosocial intervention. Results of this assessment will be used to develop a rationale for integrating a psychologist into the interdisciplinary team at the Kessler Burn and Trauma Center.

The Department of Psychiatry  
Presents the 8th Annual  
**TRAINEE POSTER DAY**

June 2, 2021



In celebration of the scholarly works of our trainees

Please join us  
From  
11:00 to 1:00

To be held **Virtually**  
On Zoom

Link to be sent at a later date



## Internship Program Leadership Projects (Cont'd)

### **TRANSFORM Research Center: Leveraging Technology and Social Media to Disseminate Child Maltreatment Research**

#### **Jessica Kusina, MA.**

Child maltreatment remains a persistent problem that has lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Essential research examines strategies for preventing child maltreatment, though findings do not always reach target audiences. The Community Engagement Core of the TRANSFORM Research Center leverages technology via webinars, podcasts, social media, and online information sheets to disseminate child maltreatment research across professional disciplines. Alongside mentors **Erinn Duprey, Ph.D.**, and **Corey Nichols-Hadeed, J.D.**, Jessica's role is to examine the impact of technology-based dissemination strategies. Specifically, Jessica is gathering analytics to determine best practices for research dissemination via the Twitter platform. She is also helping create a fact sheet for educators that discusses practices for cultivating resilience in the school setting. Check out our Twitter account @theTRANSFORMctr or website at <http://www.thetransformcenter.org/> to stay connected and learn more about child maltreatment prevention.



### **Impact of COVID-19 on admissions to the Child & Adolescent Inpatient Unit**

#### **Leah Reece, MA**

The literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and adolescent's mental health indicates possible profound impacts on psychological distress and functioning. Under the mentorship of **Dr. Deanna Sams**, I am examining the impact of COVID-19 on admissions to the Child and Adolescent Inpatient Unit. The electronic medical records of children and adolescents admitted to Strong Memorial Hospital's Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Inpatient Unit will be reviewed using the keywords, "COVID-19", "COVID", "Corona", "Coronavirus"



"Quarantine", "Lock-down", and "Pandemic" to assess whether factors related to the pandemic were involved in the psychiatric crisis that led to admission. For those admissions that are related to COVID-19, admission month and demographics (age, gender, race) of the individual will be collected. Data from admissions taking place between March 13, 2020 to January 1, 2021 will be reviewed. Data will then be analyzed to determine the percentage of adolescent psychiatric inpatient admissions related to COVID-19 and the pattern of COVID-19 related admissions from month to month. This information will be used to help understand the unprecedented mental health impact of a global pandemic and will assist mental health service leaders to better plan for patient flow should there be another wave of quarantine/isolation.

## Innovations in Education



### **The Laboratory for Behavioral Health Skills (LaBHS)**

**Director: Wendi Cross, PhD**

**Co-Director: Steve Fassone**

The Skills Lab is an innovative, dedicated studio focused on the development and assessment of behavioral health competencies via simulation methods. It is an education resource for the Department which supports the training and education mission. For example, LaBHS offers our trainees the opportunity to practice their suicide prevention skills with highly trained standardized patient (SP) actor-educators. This

year, sessions were conducted remotely in line with clinical care during COVID. Encounters with SPs, as well as the feedback, were recorded and securely uploaded for trainees and supervisors to review and discuss. We look forward to future simulations including Jennifer West's Deans Teaching Fellowship training on firearm safety.

### **A Behavioral Health Virtual Pediatric Dental Room**

#### **Taylor MacLean, MA**

This project is taking place at Eastman Dental School under the mentorship of **Jennifer West, Ph.D.** and **Ritu Shah DMD** and in collaboration with a dental resident, Christopher Soares, DMD. Behavioral disruption and dental anxiety are very common among children and may prevent them from seeking dental care all together. Based on a need's assessment, most providers with Eastman Dental School agreed that behavior health interventions are very beneficial in addressing these disruptions and fear. However, many providers noted that there are a number of barriers in utilizing these skills in vivo, with the biggest barriers being time and provider comfort with implementation. The aim of this project is to create a tool to help patients, parents, and providers prepare for their dental visits and access behavioral health skills prior to the appointment. In order to do this, Taylor MacLean created a virtual dental room which included links to mindfulness, educational videos, games, progressive muscle relaxation, and other child and parent-centered resources. Each patient will be directed to the scannable QR code as they check in for their appointment and encouraged to explore as they wait for their appointment. Providers also have links to this virtual dental room chairside, allowing them to use the strategies and videos during appointments as appropriate.



### **Evaluation of a Multi-Disciplinary Case Consultation Experience**

#### **Kassandra Sciolli, MA**

Multi-disciplinary teams are essential in formulating biopsychosocial approaches that aid in providing effective patient care. As a way to enhance group supervision experience, a new addition for the clinical psychology doctoral interns' inpatient experience is leading small groups of medical students in a multi-disciplinary case consultation group during their inpatient psychiatry clerkship. This experience involves medical students presenting and discussing a patient from a biopsychosocial perspective, a group discussion about the case, and interns providing feedback to the medical students. To bring the educational experience full circle, the psychology interns receive supervision of supervision.



The leadership project, under the supervision of **Drs. Deanna Sams** and **Laura Cardella** involves a) developing a measure and method for medical students to provide feedback regarding their experience in the multidisciplinary case consultation, b) developing measures and a method for psychology interns to provide feedback regarding their experience leading these groups, and c) collecting and analyzing this data on an ongoing basis to make meaningful recommendations about improving the experience for both medical students and psychology interns.

## Internship Program Leadership Projects (Cont'd)

### **Developing Individualized Milieu and Behavior Management Plans for Adult Inpatient Settings**

**Caitlin Titus, MS**

Adult Inpatient Psychiatry and the Inpatient Medicine in Psychiatry Services unit (iMIPS) specialize in the treatment of individuals with significant behavioral and medical issues. The primary goal of this leadership project is to support caregivers treating patients with challenging behaviors on inpatient units. Under the mentorship of **Drs. Tara Augenstein and Marc Swogger**, as well as nursing staff (Nancy M. Bowllan RN, MSN, EdD) the aim was to develop a flexible framework for implementing behavioral programming across diverse units. Based on unit needs, the initial target area was to create a modifiable template for assessment and treatment for individuals engaging in non-suicidal self-injury. The template allows for care teams to provide more preventative and therapeutic interventions, while still keeping patient safety a priority in a way that is guided and streamlined across units. Additionally, a MyPath training was created to ensure that staff were provided education and training on this new patient assessment and treatment plan. Within this training, there are built-in surveys that will help to assess baseline knowledge before the training, after the training, and after practicing using the new tool. The data will be used to evaluate implementation effectiveness and ultimately modify the template and/or training as necessary. Once this process is complete, the team hopes to develop another flexible framework related to general coping skills that will provide support for care teams and patients across diverse units.

### **Routinized assessment of mental health outcomes among Spanish-speaking psychiatric outpatients**

**Ana Vallejo Sefair, MA**

Lazos Fuertes is one of the only bi-lingual and bi-cultural mental health clinics in the state outside of New York City. Founded by Telva Olivares, MD, Lazos Fuertes has served hundreds of patients since it opened over 20 years ago. This project, under the supervision of **Drs. Telva Olivares and Caroline Silva**, involves using electronic medical record (EMR) data to characterize the patient population at Lazos Fuertes since its inception. By requesting, cleaning and analyzing this EMR data, we aim to gain a more thorough understanding of the patients, their symptoms and presenting problems, and typical length of episodes of care. Using this data, we will then develop a Spanish-language protocol for tracking patient outcomes at the clinic. This will be done in collaboration with the staff at the clinic with hopes of integrating routinized symptom assessments into their patient-facing work. Once a protocol is complete, feedback will be collected from staff to continue revising routinized assessment as needed.



## Where are Dr. LaVigne and Dr. Rosenberg Now?



Internship alum **Dr. Tim LaVigne** (16-17) and **Dr. Elyse Rosenberg** (17-18), share with us their current positions and comments on training with us.

**Elyse:** In my current position, I am a clinical psychologist in an intensive outpatient program for young adults with co-occurring medical and mental health challenges at the Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital in Hartford, CT. My role here includes group therapy, individual therapy, working collaboratively with patients and families, interdisciplinary care, and supervision. Following internship at URMC, I completed my post-doctoral fellowship in consultation/liaison psychiatry at the Institute of Living/Connecticut Children's. I use so much of what I learned in my training at URMC in my work, such as group therapy skills, working together with providers across disciplines, and delivering evidence-based care. From adapting my training in Ross Greene's "Kids do well if they can" approach to the populations I am working with, to leading groups on values-based action and sleep hygiene, to applying integrated care skills as part of a multidisciplinary team, I am able to draw from my rich internship training experiences in my current position. I am so grateful for my time at URMC and the supportive mentorship, training across clinical and research domains, and long-lasting collegial relationships which have been pivotal in my professional development.

**Tim:** I am currently a pediatric psychologist in the Division of Pain and Palliative Medicine at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. Although my clinical and research work broadly focus on supporting children and adolescents with chronic pain, I have a specific interest in treating chronic headaches and serve as the Co-Director of the CT Children's Pediatric Headache Center in our division. The training I received at URMC absolutely informed the psychologist I am today. As a psychologist embedded in a medical division at an academic medical center, both the inpatient and outpatient rotations on internship provided an excellent introduction to multidisciplinary work. The seminars, in addition to including an AWESOME breakfast spread, helped to really polish my core CBT training while also introducing me to several ACT and Collaborative & Proactive Solutions approaches I still pull from today. Plus, even though it wasn't something I learned in a seminar, I also picked up my hands down favorite relaxation exercise - hot chocolate breathing - from one of my fellow trainees when we co-led a social skills group. The dedication to suicide prevention, including helping with Wendi Cross and Jennifer West's provider education research, helped me gain confidence in assessing for safety in both an empathetic and evidence-based manner. And finally, one of the highlights of my time in Rochester was working with my different supervisors and mentors. From grad school through your early career, you are lucky if you have a handful of supervisors who truly take the time to get to know you, care about you and your patients, and offer the perfect balance of instruction & expertise while still allowing for growing autonomy. At URMC, that description honestly applied to every supervisor and mentor I worked with - and serves as my model now that I'm the one supervising interns.



We're on Facebook! The Clinical Psychology Training Program has a FB group, "**URMC-psychology Alumni**". There are currently 86 members including faculty and alumni trainees. It is fun to stay in touch with graduates and hear about their personal and professional lives. Check it out!