Let Us Know About Your Success!

We would love to hear how and what you’re doing and your recent career highlights. We’d also like to highlight your accomplishments on our departmental alumni website. Please keep in touch! Just drop an email to Michelle at: mmaffet1@jhu.edu.

Department of Mental Health Alumni and Friends Newsletter

August 2018

Letter from the Chair:

Dear friends,

I hope you have enjoyed a restful and rejuvenating summer! We here at the Department of Mental Health are getting ready for a new academic year, and reflecting on the amazing year just completed. Our faculty, staff, students, and affiliates continue to make an impact on the lives of people, families, and communities affected by mental and behavioral health challenges. As you will see in this newsletter, they have received accolades for their achievements, and have continued their excellence in teaching and advising. Our graduates have defended impressive dissertations and masters theses and our alumni continue to make us proud. We are so fortunate to have such dedicated and talented people working together.

This year, we have added additional faculty, including two new faculty in the Moore Center and a first-ever collaboration with the Kennedy Krieger Institute, where investigators at KKI have their primary academic appointment in our department. Check out the expertise and activities of these faculty on page 8. Also, after the retirement of our long-lasting Administrator, Linda Neighoff, we have welcomed Carlina Carter as our Senior Administrator. Carlina has been a critical member of our administrative team for a decade, and is fully prepared to take on this new role. We are grateful to all of our extremely competent and generous administrative staff for their help and dedication during the transition.

In October, our new Dean, Ellen MacKenzie, PhD ’79, MSc ’75, took the reins. As a former chair of Health Policy and Management at the School, she knows the Bloomberg School and our department very well. This winter, she asked me to chair her Strategic Plan Writing Group, tasked with crafting a plan to guide the School’s activities for the next 5-10 years. We have been actively seeking feedback from stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and school partners, since May and now have a draft in circulation. You can check out our progress at https://www.jhsphs.edu/about/strategic-plan/updates.html. We hope to have a final version for public distribution by the fall, and I am enthusiastic about the direction the School hopes to take in the coming years.

Our department also remains deeply active in the Bloomberg American Health Initiative, with DMH faculty holding leadership roles on three of the work groups: Tamar Mendelson, co-chair of Adolescent Health; Holly Wilcox, co-chair of Violence, and Liz Stuart, chair of Evaluation and Methods. Many other DMH faculty are involved in curriculum development and delivery for the American Health Initiative MPH and DrPH students. Tamar Mendelson was also named as an endowed Bloomberg Professor of American Health this summer.

As you can tell, this is an amazing place to work, with so many important projects to champion. I am grateful every day for the opportunity to contribute to the success of this Department and School, and even more grateful for the continued engagement of all of you—our alumni, friends, students, faculty, and staff.
The Wendy Klag Center annual photo to mark Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month. We encompassed everyone from community members, students, researchers, and one former dean!

Dean Ellen MacKenzie presided over her first Commencement Ceremony in May 2018. On the left is a picture of the Dean with Department Chair Dr. Fallin, as well as the other SPH chairs.

The Department hosted her in February to showcase the expertise and activities in Mental Health. The presentations from that event are available here: shorturl.at/crNP0

Patricia (Patty) Scott received a Student Assembly Recognition Award. This award is bestowed by the student body to acknowledge the recipient’s special contribution to student life. Pictured with Dean Ellen MacKenzie.

Yian (Angela) Lin, PhD student receiving the Centennial Scholarship Award from Department Chair Dr. Fallin.

DMH Recipients and Faculty at the Honors and Award Ceremony in May
Research and Education

Photo Gallery

Congratulations MHS graduates!

Photo Gallery

Congratulations MHS graduates!

Photo Gallery

Congratulations MHS graduates!

RESEARCH

In fiscal year 2017, the faculty applied for 82 grants (including competing and non-competing applications). Our success rate was 20%, with 16 grants awarded at a total amount of $7,384,255. This is better than double the current average NIH success rate, which is only funding approximately 10% of applications. This speaks to the quality and tenacity of our faculty! It should also be noted that with delays at the NIH, there are currently 47 (57% of submissions) still pending. These submissions include only grants in which our faculty were Principal Investigators—the faculty supported other investigators throughout the school and university and other institutions as well. FY 17 newly funded awards include:

- Addressing Childhood Hearing Loss Disparities in an Alaska Native population: A Community Randomized Trial /Gallo, Joseph J.
- Causal mediation methods for studying mechanisms in mental health/Stuart, Elizabeth
- Investigating economic and intimate partner violence (IPV) outcomes of mental health trials in low and middle-income countries (EcomIPV-MHI)/Bass, Judith
- Testing Psychological Mechanisms to Promote Physical Activity in Adults/Rebok, George
- Enhancing Capacity for Mental Health Research and Care in Cambodia/Murray, Laura
- Collateral Consequences of the United States Opioid Epidemic for Children/Feder, Kenneth A
- Promoting Maternal Mental Health and Wellbeing in Neonatal Intensive Care Through Mindfulness/Mendelson, Tamar
- A Longitudinal Brain and Behavior Study of Autism from Infancy through School Age/Fallin, Margaret D
- Confirmatory double-blind placebo-controlled efficacy trial of a gluten-free diet in a subgroup of persons with schizophrenia who have high levels of IgG Anti-Gliadin antibodies/Eaton, William W
- ACTIVE Cognitive Training Trial: 20-Yr Follow-up of Functioning, Health, & Dementia/Rebok, George
- ACTIVE Linkage Study/Rebok, George
- Exceptional Survival: Trajectories to Functional Aging (CHS All Stars)/Carlson, Michelle C
- JHU Disrupt Aging Perceptions on Aging Research /Carlson, Michelle C
- Characterizing disparities in late-onset Alzheimer’s disease risk through polygenic risk and epidemiologic factors in the Health and Retirement Study/Benke, Kelly
- Estimating Population Effects in Mental Health Research Using Meta-Analysis/Hong, Hwanhee
- Conference Speaker and AARP Webinar/Carlson, Michelle C

EDUCATION

During this 2017-2018 academic year faculty taught more than 46 formal courses with a total enrollment of 1005 students. Faculty advised 29 doctoral students, 18 postdoctoral fellows and 27 master’s students.

Our faculty members sat on 42 school-wide preliminary oral examinations and 32 final dissertation defense examinations for students in this department and eight other departments in the school (excluding only the laboratory departments of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Molecular Microbiology and Immunology). Applications for our doctoral program remain steady (54), and we are successfully recruiting some of the nation’s best. As of now, we are expecting to be joined this fall by six new doctoral students, seven new postdoctoral fellows, and approximately 29 new master’s students.

Under the direction of Drs. Maher and Johnson, the NI-DA Drug Dependence Epidemiology Training (DDET) Program was funded for another five years. The program is now in its twenty-sixth year and with seven predoctoral and seven postdoctoral candidates is one of the largest in the School.
Congratulations to our Department Graduates

Doctoral Degree Recipients

Doctor of Philosophy

Jura Lydia Sarkus Augustinavicius
Advisor: Judith Bass, PhD
Caregiver Wellbeing, Family Functioning, and Child Cognitive Development Among HIV-affected Families in Uganda

April Joy G. Damian
Advisor: Tamar Mendelson, PhD
Addressing Trauma in Urban Youth: Evaluating the Implementation of Baltimore City Health Departments Citywide Trauma-Informed Care Training Intervention

David Olawuyi Fakunle
Advisor: Philip Leaf, PhD
Black, White or Green? The Effects of Racial Composition and Socioeconomic Status on Neighborhood-level Tobacco Outlet Density in Maryland

Luther Gregory Kalb
Advisor: Elizabeth Stuart, PhD
Mental Health Crises in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Chang Shu
Advisor: Brion Maher, PhD
Genetics and Epigenetics of Psychiatric Disorders

Emma Kilvington Staff
Advisor: Peter Zandi, PhD
Family Environment and Polygenic Risk in the Bipolar High-risk Context

Ryoko Susukida
Advisor: Tamar Mendelson, PhD
Generalizability of Randomized Controlled Trials of Substance Use Disorder Treatments

Demy Alfonso
Kavya Anchuri
Christina Asher Bradley
Casey Costello
Abhery Das
Emily Grace Deal
William Ross Felder
Johanne Melissa Germain
Victoria Rachel Green
Siri Guntupalli
Gregory Hard
Muhammad Kanan Hudud
Lacey Sara Kaplan
Orlando Lopez-Fernandez, III
Tenzin C. Lhaksampa
Kevin Mortazavi
Casandra Caroline Nyhuis
Dae Woong Oh
Anjana Rao
Ashnaa Tamarapakam Rao
Seanna Marie Renworth
Cassidy Lauren Roby
Meghana Ranjith Shetty
Sara So
Da-Yea Song
Shengjia Xu
JueJun Yang

Master of Health Science

Master’s Degree Recipients

Demy Alfonso
Kavya Anchuri
Christina Asher Bradley
Casey Costello
Abhery Das
Emily Grace Deal
William Ross Felder
Johanne Melissa Germain
Victoria Rachel Green
Siri Guntupalli
Gregory Hard
Muhammad Kanan Hudud
Lacey Sara Kaplan
Orlando Lopez-Fernandez, III
Tenzin C. Lhaksampa
Kevin Mortazavi
Casandra Caroline Nyhuis
Dae Woong Oh
Anjana Rao
Ashnaa Tamarapakam Rao
Seanna Marie Renworth
Cassidy Lauren Roby
Meghana Ranjith Shetty
Sara So
Da-Yea Song
Shengjia Xu
JueJun Yang

Faculty Promotions

Michelle C. Carlson, PhD has been promoted to Professor.
Heather Volk, PhD has been promoted to Associate Professor.
Tamar Mendelson, PhD, has been named the Director for the Center of Adolescent Health and a Bloomberg Professor of American Health. Dr. Mendelson will continue to maintain her faculty appointment in the department.

Faculty Awards

Excellence in Research and Practice

Elizabeth Stuart, PhD is now officially the chair of NIMH’s Mental Health Services (SERV) review panel. She is also the recipient of the 2018 Myrto Lefkopoulou Distinguished Lectureship at Harvard SPH, awarded to a promising statistician who has made contributions to either collaborative or methodologic research in the applications of statistical methods to biology or medicine, and/or who has shown excellence in the teaching of biostatistics.

Tamar Mendelson was appointed by the leadership of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to serve as a member of the consensus study Committee on Fostering Healthy Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Development Among Children and Youth. Tamar is also now a standing member of the NIH Interventions to Prevent and Treat Addictions (IPTA) Study Section.

Philip Leaf, PhD has been appointed to the Governor’s Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices.

Andrew P Feinberg, MD, MPH received the 2017 Award for Excellence in Molecular Diagnostics by the Association for Molecular Pathology (AMP). This is the Association’s highest honor.

Excellence in Teaching

For the first three terms of the 2017-18 AY, 18 course instructors received a rating of 3.6 or above (highest is 4). Faculty who received excellent course evaluations include:

Deborah Agus (adjunct)  Dani Fallin  George Rebk
Judy Bass  Ramin Mojtabai  Elizabeth Stuart
Michelle Carlson  Rashelle Musci  Holly Wilcox
Diana Clarke (adjunct)  Jeanine Parisi  Peter Zandi

Star Teachers/Advisors

Rashelle J. Musci, PhD, Assistant Professor; and Adam P. Spira, PhD, Associate Professor, received an Advising, Mentoring and Teaching Award (AMTRA) from the School. This award is for faculty who demonstrate a commitment to teaching, advising and mentoring students and who make significant contributions to student quality of life. Recipients are chosen by the Committee for Honors and Awards of the Student Assembly, based on nominations and testimonials by students.
Alumni News (cont’d)

- Cassie Wicken, MHS ’13 has completed her first year of medical school and involved with an addiction treatment training program put on by the nonprofit http://_strike.org/ in Pittsburgh. They are doing great work. Cassie will be doing lots of addiction training and psychiatry shadowing this summer.

- Pia Mauro, PhD ’15 was appointed as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. She is also the Academic Coordinator of the NIDA T32 Substance Abuse Epidemiology Training Program (Director: Deborah Hasin, Co-Director: Silvia Martins), and an NIH LRP Ambassador.

- Keila D. Barber, MHS ’13 started a new venture at the end of May with the National Council of Behavioral Health as the Center for Integrated Health Solutions’ Senior Project Coordinator. In this role she will be working with the National Council to ensure their community-based mental health and addiction provider organizations receive the necessary technical assistance to achieve integrated care objectives. Prior to this, Keila worked at the American Psychiatric Association as the Survey Operations Manager and Assistant Project Manager in the Division of Research.

New Faculty

Luther B. Kalb, PhD joined the faculty as Assistant Professor in January. Luke received his PhD from DMH here as JHSPH, as well as his MPH. He is currently an Investigator at the Hopkins-affiliated Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI), an internationally recognized institution dedicated to improving the lives of Children and young adults with pediatric developmental disabilities and disorders of the brain, spinal cord and musculoskeletal system, through patient care, special education, research, and professional training. KKI does not provide academic appointments; thus, KKI investigators who want an opportunity to teach, advise, and collaborate in an academic setting must obtain primary appointments at Hopkins.

Gazi F. Azad, PhD also joined the faculty as Assistant Professor. She is a also a full-time employee at KKI. Dr. Azad received a PhD from the University of California, Riverside. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship from the University of Pennsylvania under the mentorship of alum Dr. David Mandell. Dr. Azad’s research on school-based implementation science for children and families with autism spectrum disorder is an outstanding fit for our department and school.

Rebecca Fix, PhD joined the faculty as Assistant Scientist. Dr. Fix received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Auburn University. She works with faculty in the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and brings expertise in sex crime policy, an area important to the Center’s mission and to our department.

Reshmi Nair, PhD, has joined the faculty as Assistant Scientist. Dr. Nair received her doctorate in Mathematics from the University of Wyoming and completed graduate level quantitative methods courses at JHSPH before joining the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in 2017 as a research associate. Dr. Reshmi’s work supports ongoing efforts at the Moore Center to evaluate the effects of juvenile sex offender registration and notification policies and to validate child sexual abuse primary prevention efforts. She has taken a leadership role in work that aims to identify geographic differences in rates of abuse and the macrosystem factors that might be associated with such differences.

Student Highlights

Student Departmental Awards 2017-18

Paul V. Lemkau Award
Collice Holigne, PhD student
This award is made annually for outstanding performance in doctoral students in the field of Mental Health.

Morton Kramer Fund
Kimberly B. Roth, PhD student
This award is made annually to a doctoral student who has demonstrated excellence in the application of biostatistical and epidemiologic methods to mental disorders.

Lucy Shum Memorial Scholarship Award
Yuan (Marian) Tzouang, PhD student
This award is made annually to a doctoral student who has demonstrated excellence in public health policy for mental health issues.

Dr. Ali and Rose Kawi Scholarship
M. Claire Greene, PhD student
This award is made annually to a doctoral student who has demonstrated excellence in mental health policy issues.

Alberta Szalita Award
Noa Krawczyk, PhD student
This award is made annually to an outstanding doctoral student in the Department of Mental Health.

Centennial Scholarship Award
Yian (Angela) Lin, PhD student
In honor of the School’s 100th anniversary, the Centennial Scholars Program provides immediate impact funding for the best and the brightest public health students at the Bloomberg School.

School-wide Awards 2017-18

Paul Nestadt, MD, Postdoctoral Fellow, is the 2018 Delta Omega Scholarship Competition winner for the “Policy” category.

Ryan Andrews, PhD student, is the 3rd place recipient of the 2018 Delta Omega Scholarship Competition winner for the Applied Research” category.

Kayva Anchuri, MHS ’18, was elected to Delta Omega

Victoria Green, MHS ’18, was elected to Delta Omega

Ashnaa Rao, MHS ’18, was elected to Delta Omega

Da-Yea Song, MHS ’18, was elected to Delta Omega

Jura Augustinavicius, PhD ’18 was elected into Phi Beta Kappa.

Other Student Awards 2017-18

Dan Lakin, PhD candidate, has been selected as a Global Health Field Research Award recipient by the Johns Hopkins Center for Global Health. Dan will use the award to do some qualitative work for his dissertation work this summer.

Noa Krawczyk, PhD candidate, is a recipient of the 2017-18 Public Health Practice Award for her help the Behavioral Health Leadership Institute establishing Project Connections Buprenorphine Program, an opioid treatment model saving lives of people at very high risk for overdose in Baltimore. These awards recognize both long-term public health practice achievements as well as shorter, intensive work that yields results.
Alumni Highlight: Ibrahim Al-Jabbar, MHS ’16

We caught up with Ibrahim Al-Jabbar for a chat about what he’s been up to since graduation. He is doing some interesting work!

Q: What did you do after graduation (e.g. postdoc, employments, etc.)?
A: A few things! So, after graduation, I worked for a year as an educational consultant with a nonprofit organization called The Flamboyan Foundation. This organization is geared towards improving education in DC schools by improving teacher/family partnerships. They host workshops, teacher training, fellowships, and are a major philanthropic force in the DC public school sector, and their success has been documented in research studies conducted by Hopkins! I also worked with a doctor at Walter Reed on some of his research projects, and just received notification that a case report we worked on will be published in the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists Clinical Case Reports Journal soon. Finally, I can’t formally announce what exactly I’m doing yet, but I am also involved in a networking/mentoring partnership in relation to Autism Speaks and nonprofit organizations across the country geared towards addressing gaps in services, resources and education for African-Americans with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families. I’ve been busy to say the least.

Q: What is your current position/responsibilities?
A: Currently, I took some time off from working to prepare for my MCATs in May and take Physics and Biochemistry to apply to medical school this coming cycle. After graduating, I took some time to accomplish some professional goals while planning my next steps regarding my career, as well as spend some much-needed time with my family. I am also searching for employment and research opportunities for the following year until I (hopefully) matriculate.

Q: How did your graduate degree from the Department of Mental Health prepare you for your position?
A: I’m a two-time Hopkins graduate (undergrad and grad) and while my undergraduate degree prepared me professionally and gave me confidence that I could survive in a science heavy field, my graduate degree from the Department of Mental Health made me feel that I could not only survive, but succeed. Bloomberg provided me with access to some of the greatest minds, research, and education in the Public Health and Mental Health fields. I thrived educationally in this program even beyond my own expectations, and the coursework and research (both scientific and social) challenged me in ways I had never been challenged and opened many doors for me. I can now comfortably call myself a mental health professional and look upon my fellow graduates, and other researchers and educators in the worlds of neuroscience, cognitive science and mental health, as an equal.

Q: Do you maintain collaboration with any faculty at Hopkins?
A: I do! Last year, in addition to my work outside of Hopkins, I came back to present a paper related to the broad Autism phenotype in correlation with risk factors to postpartum depression. Dr. Fallin was my faculty discussant and has, along with Dr. Jeanine Parisi (my advisor while I was here) been a constant source of support for me from the moment I came to Bloomberg until now. Dr. Elizbeth Letourneau has also been great. Her area of research (the prevention of child sexual abuse and childhood victimization) is a personal passion of mine and I’ve assisted her and her colleagues during the Moore Center Symposium for the past few years. If my circumstances permit, I would love to do so again for this year’s symposium.

Q: Do you keep in touch with fellow alumni?
A: Unfortunately, I haven’t been in touch with anyone from my Bloomberg class lately. My primary means of communication with everyone was our class Facebook group and since I’ve fallen out of using Facebook and moved out of Baltimore almost immediately after graduating for a year, I only really returned for business related reasons. That being said, my cohort was amazing and any opportunity I’d have to get back in touch with them both professionally or leisurely would be great.

Q: What might you suggest to students who are interested in your type of research (any particular courses, etc.)

Ibrahim Al-Jabbar (cont’d)

A: Take advantage of your electives and don’t be afraid to explore! Going into Bloomberg, I had very specific areas in public health that correlated with my interests in medicine. I believe personally that being a doctor doesn’t stop in the office, so I wanted to take coursework that reflected enough experience to allow me to enact change in those areas at a larger level. I didn’t hesitate to spend my electives on public health courses in autism and developmental disabilities (my main area of research), human rights, health disparities in relation to race, gender and socioeconomic status, interactions between physical and mental health, prevention of childhood victimization, and a couple of advanced public health and hard science courses. Because extremely comfortable talking to your cohort and your professors. You never know who or where your next opportunity may arise from. Finally, BREATHE! Take some time to relax and never doubt yourself. You were accepted into this program for a reason so take advantage of it and enjoy the experience for what it is.

Q: Anything else that you’d like to add?
A: Thank you for the interview! I appreciate it.

Alumni News

- Shalini Wickramatilake, MHS ’11 While working on her MHS degree, Shalini’s primary interest was in the prevention of eating disorders. After an 18-year battle with her own eating disorder, in 2017, Shalini finally received specialized treatment. Now, as part of her recovery journey, she raises awareness of eating disorders as a public health problem. Over the past several months, she has spoken at the National Eating Disorders Association’s (NEDA) Regional Conference in Philadelphia, the NEDA Walk in Washington, DC, and the Eating Disorders Coalition’s (EDC) Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill. Shalini’s training in public health has helped her collaborate with researchers, lawmakers, medical professionals, individuals in recovery, and other stakeholders to elevate issues related to eating disorders.

- Andrew Rock, MHS ’13 completed a Masters in Physiology and Biophysics at VCU between 3rd and 4th year of medical school. This results in the two papers, two conference talks, 26 poster presentations, and several manuscripts in preparation. Then, he will be graduating from medical school this week and will be starting Neurosurgery Residency at Albany Medical Center this upcoming June. Andrew remarked, “I just wanted to express my appreciation for everything JHSPH and the department did for me throughout my career so far. Getting into residency and going along this entire path would not have been possible without everyone’s help and exceptional teaching/training.”

- Diana Rayes, MHS ’16 received a Fulbright research award to Germany for this fall! She will be studying how Syrian refugees living in Berlin and Hamburg use their faith to cope with the stumors of displacement and integration, as well as the role of German mental health professionals respond to these cultural nuances, and how these findings can be applied to the intertwined issues of mental well-being and integration for refugees. Diana added that the Department definitely deserves a shout out!