



Social Stress

*Exploring impacts on
biology and behavior* 2

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EARLIER THIS FALL, I had the opportunity to present the annual State of the Department Address for the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience. We had a full turnout at the Stetson Building, and my message was, "It's time to move from 'good' to 'great.'"

Since we implemented our strategic plan in 2009, the department has achieved steady financial growth. Now is the time to update and expand that plan, and I'm excited about the prospect of leading this effort. I have as much at stake as anyone, as I have recently been reappointed as the department's chair through Aug. 31, 2020, in addition to my new duties as senior vice president of strategic planning and business development at UC Health.

As we revisit and update the strategic plan, we can be pleased that financial and organizational recovery and infrastructure are largely done and in place. My goals

OUR MISSION To acquire and refine medical and scientific knowledge and then to apply it through education and clinical service toward high-quality, evidence-based treatment of people suffering from mental illnesses.

OUR VISION To be international leaders advancing the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders.

for an update include:

- Being clear on core values that are integrated into decision-making.
- Focusing strongly on building excellence across missions.
- Adapting to health care reform and preparing for more changes.
- Integrating more fully across sites and affiliates.
- Creating management processes that are more strategic.

As was done previously, an executive team will establish a framework and preliminary plan, work groups will be created for specific areas, and department-wide input will be sought. As always, we will be guided by UC Health core values of Respect, Integrity, Teamwork and Excellence (RITE) in our tripartite mission of clinical care, research and education.

Our next steps come amid heartening developments, as the Obama administration recently issued its regulations defining parity in benefits and treatment for mental illnesses as a result of federal law requiring equality between mental health care and other medical treatments. This is important not just for practical reasons, but also because it's the

right thing

to do. Mental health providers face an ongoing battle against stigmas that cause people to think that mental illness is less debilitating than physical illness, even at a time when major depression is the world's second-leading cause of disability and mental illness accounts for five of the 10 most disabling conditions.

So while things are looking up on some fronts, the battle continues and we at the UC Academic Health Center and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience need your ongoing support. Please continue to stay connected and follow our progress on our website (www.psychiatry.uc.edu) and with these letters.

Stephen M. Strakowski, MD
The Dr. Stanley and Mickey Kaplan Professor and Chairman
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience
Senior Vice President of Strategic Planning and Business Development, UC Health

On the cover: Matia Solomon, PhD, heads a lab on UC's Reading Campus as part of the Stress Neurobiology Laboratory. Her team is trying to unlock clues to social defeat—also known as bullying. *Story, Page 2*

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Nasrallah Accepts Chair At St. Louis University

Henry Nasrallah, MD, a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry and



Nasrallah

Behavioral Neuroscience for 11 years, resigned in October to become chair of the combined department of neurology and psychiatry at the St. Louis University School of Medicine. The new role also includes an endowed chair as Sydney W. Souers Professor.

"We are very glad to have had the unique opportunity to work and interact with all of you: faculty, trainees, and staff in our department as well as across the College of Medicine and the university," Nasrallah and his wife, Amelia, who served as the department's director of clinical research management, said in a farewell letter.

"We wish you and the department continued growth and prominence."

Nasrallah served as vice chair of education and training and director of the schizophrenia program at UC and was also associate dean for faculty development at the College of Medicine from 2003-2006.

Miller Appears on Panel

Shannon Miller, MD, professor of clinical psychiatry, appeared on WVXU's "Cincinnati Edition" as part of a panel discussing



Miller

smoking and e-cigarettes. The interview served the community by raising public awareness about a drug and delivery device growing rapidly in popularity.

Miller is based at the Cincinnati Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center and is program director for the VA Fellowship in Addiction Medicine Research and co-program director for the Addiction Psychiatry Fellowship.

Also on the panel were Michael Krueger, who is a VA Medical Center provider, and Susan Pinney, PhD, a professor

in the UC Department of Environmental Health and program leader, Cancer Etiology, Control and Prevention, Cincinnati Cancer Center.

McElroy Presents in Chile

Susan McElroy, MD, UC professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience



McElroy

and chief research officer at the Lindner Center of HOPE, presented at the IX International Symposium on Psychopathology and Clinical Psychiatry in Santiago, Chile, Oct. 4-5, 2013. She was one of just a few international

lecturers presenting during this course.

McElroy presented "Eating Disorders Today: A General Overview" and "Binge Eating Disorder: Diagnostic, Comorbidities and Treatment." The first presentation was intended to provide an update on eating disorders; the second was a more in-depth discussion of binge eating disorder.

McElroy is internationally known for her research in bipolar disorder, eating disorders, obesity, impulse control disorders and pharmacology.

Winners of 2013 Kaplan Essay Contest Announced

Molly Tolins at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, is the winner of the 2013 Stanley M. Kaplan Essay Contest. She won the \$500 first prize for "The Bilingual Brain: Current Theories and Research in Dual Language Processing."

Second prizes (\$250 each) went to Bryan Lubomirsky at the University of Toledo for "Preliminary study on the relationship between visitation in the emergency department and post-traumatic mental health" and Michelle C. Liu at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai for "A case of reversible neuropsychiatric symptoms in HIV due to toxic leukoencephalopathy."

The contest was established by Stanley Kaplan, MD, a member of the psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience faculty from 1954 until his death in 2011, to encourage improved writing and research skills among medical students. Winners

were announced by the medical student education division of the UC Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience.

Arnold Presents in San Diego

Lesley Arnold, MD, professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience and director



Arnold

of the Women's Health Research Program, presented at the American College of Rheumatology 2013 annual meeting in San Diego Oct. 30, 2013.

Arnold was the lead investigator of a study that showed that antidepressants do not interfere with the efficacy or safety of pregabalin (Lyrica) in patients with fibromyalgia, and can therefore be safely continued.

Arnold said that previous clinical trials of pregabalin excluded patients on antidepressants. "This is the first study to show that pregabalin can help patients with fibromyalgia who are concurrently on antidepressants," she added.

UC Health Appoints Lofgren CEO

Richard (Rick) Lofgren, MD, MPH, became the new president and CEO of UC Health, effective Dec. 2, 2013.



Lofgren

He succeeded Jim Kingsbury, who retired effective Nov. 30.

Lofgren previously served at UK HealthCare, the University of Kentucky's health system, and as senior vice president and chief clinical officer for the University Healthsystem Consortium in Chicago. ■

To advance the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders through education and clinical services, we are forming a community advisory board. If interested, please contact Kathy Nullmeier at 513-558-6769 or kathy.nullmeier@uc.edu. ■

Researcher's Goal: Unlocking Clues to Social Defeat

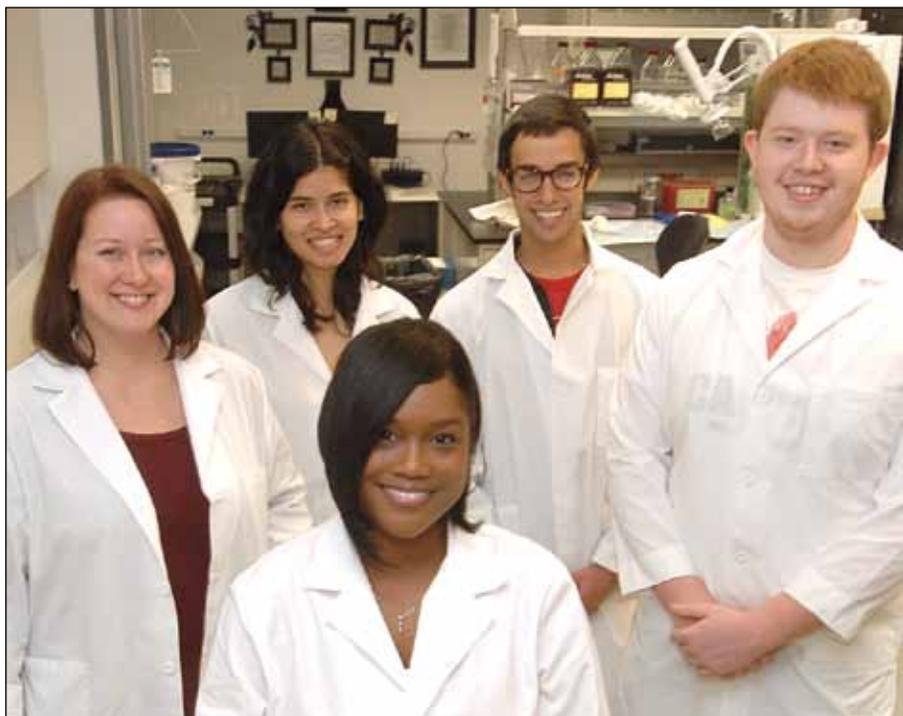
The lab of Matia Solomon, PhD, is a happy place. Inspirational sayings are posted on the walls, and a framed poem saluting her departure from Georgia State University—where she received undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees—occupies a place of pride.

So you wouldn't know it at first glance, but Solomon, an assistant professor of psychology and psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience based in the Stress Neurobiology Laboratory on UC's Reading Campus, heads a team that is trying to unlock clues to social defeat—also known as bullying. And at a time when even 300-pound National Football League linemen report that they are being bullied, her team's findings could be more important than ever.

"People find it hard to believe that a 300-pound lineman can be bullied," Solomon says. "However, the psychological toll of undergoing constant social threats or taunting in many instances may be just as detrimental as an actual physical encounter. Bullying is not just about size.

"The name of the lab is the Social and Affective Neuroscience Lab, and what that means is we're very interested in how social experiences impact our brains and our ability to modulate future stress responses," says Solomon. "We're interested in the positive social experiences, because we know that social support has stress buffering properties, but we're also interested in the opposite, too: How do negative social experiences like bullying or undergoing constant social stress—even from our loved ones—affect brain function and behavior?"

Solomon, trained in a psychology program and bringing an intense interest in behavior to her research, says, "I've always wanted to come up with newer ways to explore behavior that people don't really look at." Specifically, she likes to look at how reactions to stress manifest themselves in different environments. "Because when many people in the basic research world look at anxiety or depression," she says, "they usually look at them in one context. We typically examine behavior in the environments that are



Matia Solomon, PhD (center), with (from left to right) Jody Caldwell, Swagata Karkare, Joshua Streicher and Andrew Birkenhauer.

designed to elicit anxiety-like or depression-like behavior. I believe that anxiety and depression do not necessarily manifest in every environment."

Her efforts haven't gone unnoticed. Earlier this year, she was selected to represent UC for the *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education* magazine Emerging Scholars program. The award recognizes minority scholars from around the country who demonstrate a robust and innovative research agenda, and a commitment to service. From the pool of representatives, the magazine will select 12 winners to be announced in January 2014.

Solomon's lab primarily uses social stressors to examine the impact of stress on brain and behavior. She evaluates the impact of stress on behavior by placing rodents in a variety of environments to determine how they adapt to different contexts. "And what we have found," she says, "is that many animals have the ability to adapt to different environments.

"So if they are in a threatening environment, they show appropriate behavioral responses—they freeze or display startled-like responses, for

example. But when they're on their 'home' turf, and they have the ability to control the situation, they show a different response, and they try to distance themselves from the stress using a technique called defensive burying." (Typically in defensive burying, rodents use bedding materials to erect a barrier between them and an unwanted or noxious stimulus.)

In one instance, Solomon evaluated how rodents that underwent social stress reacted to a novel animal when it was placed in their own home territory. Burying is considered an active coping strategy, while freezing and other forms of submissive behaviors are considered passive.

"The socially defeated animals were trying to bury the novel animal in their own cage, but they only did it in an environment where they felt safe—never in a novel environment, and never in the threatening environment. And what this allowed us to understand is that these animals have the ability to modulate their behavior based on their environment. If we had tested them only in one environ-

ment, we would have walked away saying, “Social defeat causes anxiety and depression.” It does, but it manifests itself in different ways, and you can only get at that by testing the animals in different environments.”

Solomon is now exploring critical brain regions that subserve these active vs. passive coping strategies following a history of social stress in females and males.

So how do you mimic social defeat in rats? Think in terms of a love triangle:

“We have a male and female that are housed together, so they’ve bonded,” says Solomon. “Then we put our experimental male into the couple’s home cage, but he’s protected in a wire mesh cage so they can’t get at him. We let this go on for about 3 minutes, then we take the female out, take the experimental male out of the mesh cage and allow the two males to interact. The resident aggressor (bully) exhibits aggressive behavior toward the

experimental animal. Following the agonistic encounter, the experimental animal displays many of the neuroendocrine and behavioral consequences that are routinely seen in anxiety and/or depression.

“Many laboratories do not necessarily separate the physiological vs. psychological impact of the defeat experience. We are interested in the psychological effects of social defeat, because that’s what a lot of bullying is. Furthermore, many laboratories primarily focus on social defeat in males. Well, we know that females are also vulnerable to social stress as well.”

With females, a maternal aggression model is used, because, as Solomon puts it, “A female will defend her pups against anything.” (While males tend to size each other up before attacking, lactating females don’t wait around, Solomon says: “It’s immediate, and it’s robust.”)

“What is most interesting is that the

behavioral effects of social stress are potent and long lasting. Many of these animals continue to show anxiety-like or depression-like behaviors for at least one month after the termination of the stressor. We have also observed that social stress during the developmental period increases the aggression in adulthood in some animals.”

Solomon says her lab’s focus on sex differences is particularly important, given that women are twice as likely to suffer from stress-induced psychopathologies such as depression and anxiety. She currently is principal investigator on a \$200,000 National Institutes of Health grant funding her efforts to explore the effects of chronic stress on female depression.

“My hope is that our efforts will lead to the development of effective treatment interventions for depression and anxiety that are uniquely based on the sex and age of the individual,” she says. ■

A RESEARCHER’S PATH: **MATIA SOLOMON, PHD**

Initially I wanted to be a clinical psychologist, so I received a BA in psychology from Georgia State University in Atlanta, my hometown. For the longest time, because I’d always been interested in helping people cope with depression and anxiety, I thought I was going to be a clinical psychologist. So I was able to attach myself to a clinical psychologist, and she allowed me to trail her. When I heard about the patients’ stories, I would leave and go home and bawl, because it was a lot, and I was quite young.

My experience with the clinical psychologist didn’t dampen my desire to study depression and anxiety, but my interest started to shift from treating people with depression and anxiety to trying to figure out why some people suffer from depression and anxiety. I knew clinical psychology wouldn’t be enough. I knew that it had to be that and something else, but I didn’t know what the something else was. At the time, I didn’t know what neuroscience was. I had never heard of neuroscience. If someone would have told me 20 years ago that I would be a neuroscientist, I would have laughed. Everyone I thought of who was a scientist was weird. I had never seen a scientist who looked like me. My thinking at that time was, most scientists have tunnel vision—they live in the lab, they don’t talk to each other, they just try to figure out their problem and then they go home.

I took a class called Physiological Psychology, and our professor, Kim Huhman, PhD, told us about her research interests. She was interested in how social stress impacts the brain and behavior. Her career seemed fascinating to me and she helped me to understand the importance of the brain as a master regulator of our emotions. In my pursuit toward trying to understand the causes of depression and anxiety, I never considered the brain. I thought, I have to work with her. So I went up to her and I said, Hi, I know you don’t know me—it was a huge class—but I’d really like to work with you. She told me to wait to see how I did on the final exam and we could talk about a potential research opportunity in her lab. After the class ended, she informed me that I made one of the highest grades on the final exam. She told me I could come visit her behavioral neuroscience laboratory.

I walked into the lab thinking that there were going to be human subjects, but I was wrong. She worked with hamsters. The problem was that I was terrified of animals—it took me five months to open the cages! I finally got my bearings and spent two years with her as an undergraduate research assistant and later went on to get my PhD with her in psychology (behavioral neuroscience track) at Georgia State.

Fast forward 16 years later and I now have a behavioral neuroscience laboratory at the University of Cincinnati. The joy that I have when I walk into my laboratory is indescribable. The journey was long and hard, but I am happy that I didn’t give up. Although my interest in understanding depression and anxiety has not changed, the tools and techniques that I am using to understand these psychopathologies have drastically changed. My time as a postdoctoral fellow here with James Herman, PhD, really opened my eyes. Jim exposed me to a number of genetic and molecular techniques that have really enhanced my research program. When I tell people that I am interested in the neurobiology of depression, they naturally assume that I work with humans. I simply tell them that I took a different path from humans to rodents for understanding human psychopathology. ■

'Psych and the Cinema' Combines Movie With Discussion

What does a Richard Gere movie have to do with educating people about mood disorders?

Plenty, when it's followed by a discussion of bipolar disorder as depicted in the movie.

That was the purpose of a new event, "Psych and the Cinema," which combined the showing of a feature film with a discussion led by a representative of the Mood Disorders Center. The first movie was "Mr. Jones," a 1993 film starring Gere and Lena Olin.

The Nov. 14 screening in the Medical Sciences Building was free and open to the public.

"I think there's a desire in the community to learn about mental health, and movies are among the media that most people are interested in," says Cal Adler, MD, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience and member of the UC Mood Disorders Center team who led the discussion of "Mr. Jones" (The Mood Disorders Center is one of 13 centers or programs of the UC Neuro-

"I think there's a desire in the community to learn about mental health, and movies are among the media that most people are interested in."

Cal Adler, MD

science Institute, one of four institutes of the UC College of Medicine and UC Health.)

"This is a way to use movies as a springboard to overall education about mood disorders and also to address people's questions and talk about what's right with the movies and what's wrong with them."

In "Mr. Jones," directed by Mike Figgis, Gere plays a man with bipolar spectrum disorder who is arrested after a manic incident and enters a psychiatric hospital. Olin plays a psychiatrist at the hospital who has a sexual relationship with Gere's character (definitely a "wrong," Adler notes).



Cal Adler, MD

Adler says he hopes to make the evening a regular event, with subsequent movies exploring other mood disorders and led by other Mood Disorders Center specialists.

If that happens, there will be no shortage of movies to choose from. Mood disorders are a favorite Hollywood topic, and the list of Oscar nominees from the category is a long one. (Nicolas Cage won the Best Actor Oscar in 1995 for "Leaving Las Vegas," also directed by Figgis.)

"It's the human condition—mood disorders are common," says Adler. "If we don't have them, we know people who do—family members, friends, loved ones. And they bring drama to a movie."

As for Hollywood's depiction of psychiatry and psychiatrists, it leaves a lot to be desired, in Adler's view.

"A lot of it has been troublesome," he says. "Frequently, a mood disorder is treated as a character failing. At the same time, I've seen some excellent movies that have treated it very seriously."

"As for psychiatrists, they are typically not treated well in the movies and are often depicted as having inappropriate relationships with their patients."

That's all on the table for discussion, of course, and Adler looks forward to hearing what people have to say. He also is looking for suggestions for future movies.

"The point of doing this is to be fun and educational," he says. ■

Picnic, Party Spice Up the Season

Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience Department faculty, staff and friends took time out for some fun and relaxation this fall. A picnic, complete with cornhole tournament, was held at Lakeside Lodge in Sharon Woods. And a Halloween party in the Stetson Building included a department psychic and a best costume contest. ■



Prabhavathy Mannava, MD (right), who works on the Inpatient Psychiatry Service, attended the departmental picnic with her son and his family.



Program manager Molly Johnson and her fiancé, Chad Zimmerman, got into the spirit of things at the department's Halloween party.

New Faculty

The Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience welcomes its newest faculty members.



Daniel Bebo, MD
assistant professor



Craig Erickson, MD
assistant professor



Nicole Gibler, MD
assistant professor



Emily Harris, MD
assistant professor



Steven Kendall, MD
assistant professor



Cheryl McCullum-smith, MD, PhD
associate professor



Rob McCullum-smith, MD
associate professor



Suzanne Sumida, MD
assistant professor



Elizabeth Wassenaar, MD
assistant professor



Logan Wink, MD
assistant professor

Paul Thomas Droessler, MD
volunteer assistant professor

Jennifer Bowden, PhD
assistant professor

SAVE THE DATE:

NAMIWalks May 10, 2014

Sawyer Point

Raising awareness of mental illnesses and breaking down the surrounding stigma. ■

Two Receive NAMI Honors

Two members of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience faculty were honored at the annual NAMI Hamilton County awards dinner Oct. 16 at the Cintas Center, Xavier University.

Todd Palumbo, MD, a research associate professor at UC and staff psychiatrist at the Lindner Center of HOPE, received the



Exemplary Psychiatrist Award. Excerpts from the nominations for him stated that he "has genuine concern and compassion for everyone he sees at Lindner Center of HOPE and its Sibcy House ... he always has something legitimately positive to say ... He has been a savior to many and a friend to more ... it is his never-ending pursuit to bring hope to those who need it."

Walter Smitson, PhD, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience, received the Outstanding Leadership in the

Community award. Smitson serves as president and CEO of Central Clinic, an outpatient mental health agency and forensic center and the outpatient training arm for the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience. Central Clinic celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2013.



Kathleen Chard, PhD, was the speaker for the dinner. She is an associate professor of clinical psychiatry in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience and director of the department's PTSD division, based at the Cincinnati Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center facility in Ft. Thomas, Ky. ■



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UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Kavikondala Named Director of Clinical Research Management



Kavikondala

Gayathri Kavikondala has been promoted from regulatory associate II to director of clinical research management in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience's Division of Clinical Research Management.

Kavikondala has over seven years of clinical research management experience, with proficiency in the regulatory process. She previously worked as an Institutional Review Board coordinator at SAIRB before joining UC in 2008.

She received a post-master's certificate in Clinical Research Management from Duke University in 2008. She also has a master's in commerce and postgraduate

diploma in computer applications from Osmania University in Hyderabad, India.

In her new role, Kavikondala is responsible for partnering with sponsors/clinical research organizations and acquisition of new clinical research trials for the department. She will be responsible for implementation and management of clinical research studies, ensuring regulatory integrity. She will also be meeting with all clinical research programs on a regular basis to update them on potential trials. ■

