

DEPARTMENT COVID-19 UPDATE #13 - May 5, 2020

On behalf of Nick Kates, Chair, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences -

Mental Health Week is a time to focus on the mental health and wellbeing of all members of our community, especially those living with mental health and addiction problems. But this year it may also have a more personal meaning for many of us, and this Update includes some initiatives and resources that you may find helpful in looking after your own wellbeing during the pandemic.

But I'd like to start with some really great news, and that is that we've just learnt that McMaster has decided to confer the title of University Scholar on **Benicio Frey**. This honour recognizes faculty members in mid-career who have already distinguished themselves as international scholars, and is conferred upon just 2% of McMaster's faculty members. Congratulations to Benicio on a terrific achievement.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Our next Virtual Department Meeting will take place on **Wednesday May 13th at 08.00** and will be recorded. In addition to any updates over the last couple of weeks, including following up our wellness survey, a few members of the Department will be talking about their experiences during CoVID-19 and what they have learnt.

The Virtual Department Summer Celebration which is replacing this year's Department Dinner will take place on **Thursday June 11th - the previously scheduled date - from 19.00 – 20.30**. We will have an opportunity to acknowledge our award winners, celebrate the graduates of our educational programs, including the Psychiatry and Psychology Residency Programs, and to say thank you and farewell to departing faculty members.

The Best of Previous Departmental Rounds: Every week until the summer we will be offering a recording of a presentation that has been made at Department Rounds over the last 4 years. We are beginning this week with a presentation from 2018 by **Gary Hasey** which can be found on our website [here](#) and viewed at any time.

Career Reviews: One of the items most frequently commented on in the Wellness and Coping survey was concerns about academic productivity and any impact this might have on faculty members' future career plans.

As we have had to cancel career reviews until the end of May, I would like to reschedule this year's outstanding career reviews to the end of August and September. By this time the impacts and consequences of CoVID may be becoming clearer, so it may be a good time to review how this may have affected your career plans (if it has) and to look ahead to the coming year. But if you would like to have this discussion earlier, I am happy to meet in June. Joanne Milne will be following up to learn your preference and organise the meetings.

CaRMS Interviews 2021

We learnt today that next year's CaRMS interviews will be held remotely, and will be pushed back to March.

Because of changes like this, we now need to examine our longer-term needs for virtual technology and IT support, once the acute stage of the pandemic is over. This is one of numerous issues that will be central to the future evolution of the Department, and for which we need to start planning for now.

In the Media

Randi McCabe featured in two interviews following the Prime Minister's announcement about funding for online mental health programs. On CTV News [here](#) and on CP24 [here](#)

PROMOTING WELLNESS AMONGST HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

1. Upcoming wellness webinars

McMaster is offering a series of webinars to University employees to mark Mental Health Week. Sessions include managing your time and energy; planning for resilience; happiness from home and healthy sleep habits. Registration can be found [here](#)

The University of Toronto is also offering a free webinar on **Wednesday, May 6th from 6:00-7:00pm (ET)** on providing Psychological First Aid (PFA) and managing your own self care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click [here](#)

And just a reminder about some other regularly scheduled events.....

The Department's next Wellness Drop-in will be happening on Tuesday May 12th. at 12.00. Zoom link [here](#)

Mamta Gautam continues to host a **daily drop in group for physicians** every day at 16.00 to offer peer support to colleagues as we deal with COVID19. Please email Mamta directly at mgautam@rogers.com to join.

Sabina Nagpal's **weekly drop-in group for female physicians** takes place every Tuesday at 20.00. To find out more or to register send an email to her at sabinanagpal@gmail.com

And an excellent series of **global health seminars on pandemics** will be taking place over the next week, **beginning on Wednesday May 6th. at 12.00** with a presentation on **Flattening the Curve on COVID-19: Country-Specific Comparisons**. Details can be found [here](#)

2. An initiative led by members of our Department

Margaret McKinnon and **Ruth Lanius**, along with Department members **Randi McCabe**, **Anthony Nazarov** and **Michael Amlung**, recently received a nearly \$1M grant from CIHR to investigate a novel treatment intervention for Public Safety Personnel (e.g., fire, police, paramedics, dispatch) that focuses on the interaction between emotional responding (e.g., impulsivity; anger) and cognitive dysfunction in PTSD. Recognising that in the current pandemic (and

elsewhere) healthcare workers are also "first responders" willing to put their lives on the line to assist individuals affected by COVID-19, they will also be included in this study. This line of work is also funded by the Workers Safety Insurance Board of Ontario, the Military Casualty Support Foundation, and the Cowan Foundation. Other collaborators on this work from our Department and SJHH include **Randi McCabe**, **Katherine Holhausen** and **Karen Rowa**, as well as Margaret and Ruth's long-time collaborators **Col Rakesh Jetly** and **Lt Col (r'trd) Alex Heber**.

Margaret and Ruth have also put together a remarkable team of external collaborators including the *Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Training*, the *PTSD Centre of Excellence* in Ottawa, Public Safety Canada, Defence Canada, Veterans Affairs, Baycrest Centre, the University of Regina, the University of Alberta, the University of Southern California, Leiden University, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, and UC-San Diego.

Their team have also been providing support to the *Society of Respiratory Therapists*, an occupational group whose work has been particularly challenging in the face of COVID-19. As is notable here, the key to this work is team and community, with longstanding, productive collaborations and friendships driving these efforts.

3. Two recent review articles

The first looks at some of the **evidence about the impact of the pandemic on health care workers** – click [here](#) and the second focuses on different approaches to providing support – click [here](#)

SOME of the challenges of virtual meetings

An interesting article in the New York Times explains why virtual meetings and sessions can be hard psychologically. [Article](#)

New Billing Codes

The Ministry of Health has announced that they will be paying the new billing codes for virtual care as of May 1st, for all care provided after March 13th. Details can be found in this OHIP bulletin. This is completely separate from any billings you are submitting through OHIP. [Bulletin](#)

And finally....

Congratulations to **Rachel Lamont** and her partner Mark Bovet on the arrival of their new son, Max on April 26th.

Stay well, look after yourselves, and each other.

Nick