The address above has been changed to:
10 Flitt Street, West Nyack, NY 10994, westhudsonpsych@gmail.com, WestHudsonPsych.org

eSynapse
January 2016

Editor’s Comments

James Flax, MD, MPH, DFAPA

Please join APA's New FREE 'Find a Psychiatrist' Database by clicking http://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/search-directories-databases.

I want to underline the importance of the APA PAC. However much we may dislike it, this is the way American politics works: more important than the amount of money contributed is the number and percentage of members who contribute. Politicians want to know how many people feel strongly enough about the issue to give to the PAC. If you haven’t contributed, please consider doing so. Even $1 adds your name to the list and number of donors.

You will find below a synopsis of our meeting so all readers will have an idea of district branch business. But, it’s only a synopsis. Please come to a meeting to appreciate the rich discussions. Our president has written an articulate opinion on the changes in medication pricing. Dr. Paras is encouraging participation in the Out-Of-Network-Preservation-Committee. There is a report from the APA. Dr. Abdullah has again sent us a new article in his long line of erudite essays. Keep ‘em comin’, Dr. Abdullah. There is another anonymous poem. There are ads and announcements that may interest you, including from my malpractice insuror, PRMS. Please scroll all the way to the end to see it all. And, if you are not receiving the MSSNY eNews, here’s a link where you can read about issues of interest to all of medicine in New York State: http://www.mssny.org.

Denny Walters, MD wants everyone to know that he has retired due to health problems and is recovering. Nigel Bark, MD has also advised us he is retiring next summer.

Executive Council Meeting
Il Fresco Restaurant, Orangeburg, NY
Friday, February 12

Journal Club (15 minutes) PROMPTLY at 12:30 Followed immediately by Business Agenda

Please contact Mona Begum, MD (drmonabegum@gmail.com) if you are planning to attend. IT’S A FREE LUNCH!
WHAT YOUR CURRENT POLICY MIGHT BE LACKING:

A STRONG DEFENSE

“Of course we hope you’ll never need our claims expertise, but if you ever report a claim, PRMS will be with you every step of the way.

Whether you need legal guidance for an adverse event or a robust full-court defense for a lawsuit, our experts will work closely with you and your defense counsel to vigorously protect you.

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Dave Torrans, II
Senior Litigation Specialist

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Editors note: I vowed when I started this publication to publish anything sent to me by our members. Please do so.

The Priceless Sandals

Syed Abdullah, M.D.

Larry was confined to his apartment most of the time. At age 95, suffering from arthritis in both knees, it was difficult for him to venture out without assistance. Friends took turns in driving him around and accompanying him for doctor visits and such. Despite his failing physical condition, hearing loss, weak eyesight, and kidney problems, he was alert in mind and full of words of wisdom, which he shared with his visitors. He had lived through two world wars, was a stretcher-bearer at the front lines during WWI, and had served in the diplomatic corps, as a cultural attaché in various US embassies. He was actively involved with President Roosevelt’s New Deal projects.

On one of my visits to him he came up with an unusual request: “Could you take me to a shoe repair place?” My logical response was “You don’t have to go there, I will take the shoes and get them repaired.” Larry wouldn’t agree to it as he thought it improper to make me carry his shoes, which had extensive repairs over the years. We argued back and forth, but he remained insistent that he must accompany me on the mission and hold the shoes in his hands. Finally, I decided to tell him the story of a 13th century Sufi saint of Delhi:

One afternoon Nizamuddin was sitting by himself in the Sufi center when a man walked in and pleaded: “Having heard stories of your generosity I have come to you with a pressing need, please do not turn me away empty handed.” The man went on to elaborate on his need “My daughter is getting married and for that I need financial assistance.”

Nizamuddin answered in a calm and gentle voice “I have no cash on me but you are welcome to take these sandals of mine.” The man looked at the sandals toward which the Sufi had pointed. These were a pair of tattered sandals, with extensive patchwork of repairs on them.

He thought: This must be some kind of a cruel joke, or the old man has become senile.

Nizamuddin interrupted the man’s thoughts to urge him to accept the humble offering.

The man reluctantly picked up the sandals and, disappointed and puzzled, took his leave. On his way he was considering tossing these into a garbage heap. He was about to do so when a well-dressed man approached him and asked, “Where did you get those sandals?” The man related the story of his encounter with this hoary old man who was known for his generosity but who treated him so shabbily.

The stranger who had spotted the sandals was Khusrao; a minister at the royal court who had that day received his monthly salary. Khusrao also happened to be a devout disciple of Nizamuddin. He had this to say, “Would you like to sell those sandals?” To which the man replied with
disbelief and bewilderment “What price will these fetch, how will that suffice for my daughter’s dowry?” Khusrao, taking out the pouch from his pocket that contained his salary in gold coins, said, “These are priceless sandals, but if you will accept these gold pieces in exchange, I will be highly obliged.”

The transaction was completed. The man went his way, still confounded but happy. Khusrao took the sandals wrapped them in his scarf and respectfully returned them to Nizamuddin.

Larry listened to the story with rapt attention, his eyes moistened, and he agreed to let me take care of his shoes.

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**Poetry**

Anonymous

No, I cannot live like this. It’s a pity and a shame.
I have so much to do yet, but the game changer is the pain.
This tumor that is wrapped round my spine like an undulating asp
Is sapping my will to live and generally kicking my ass.

On top of this it is the holidays, Merry Christmas 2015.
It is nightmarish for me, not a pleasant daydream
and the only present I want hasn’t been created.
To save my little family for which I was mandated.

So, the question is when? How much do I have to endure?
Before I shut the shutters on this life and go searching for something more.
Wouldn’t want to ruin the holidays forever by attaching suicide to the occasion,
And New Years won’t do for more or less the same pathetic reason.

But I deserve some peace and a pain-free coming home.
I guess I’ll try to believe in that as much as anything in the unknown.
And maybe I’ll get to see my grandmother and a wonderful Dad.
In a new place where peace and harmony truly can be had.

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**Out-Of-Network-Preservation-Committee**

Dear Colleagues,

We are in practice at a time when patients have a rapidly diminishing choice of which physicians they can see because of restrictions of their out of network benefits, increasing out of network deductibles, and co-insurances.

For the vast majority of our patients, getting reimbursement from their insurer is the only way they can afford to see the doctor of their choice.

Out of network reimbursement is important to our patients. It is also important to us as providers who wish to continue to provide a high level of care to our patients. It is imperative that we act now to preserve and improve out of network coverage in N.Y.
After reading about the "Out-Of-Network-Preservation-Committee" in the APA news, I participated in a teleconference December 11th. The OON Preservation Committee is a unified, coordinated group of physicians, of all disciplines, from all NY Organizations, societies, institutes and associations. They are committed to keeping patients and their physicians in charge of determining from whom they seek their medical treatment.

Currently there are 280 members; the group only formed 6 months ago. They are seeking new members in all fields of medical practice. I have volunteered to participate in recruiting.

There is no formal application process to become a member. Now is the time to advocate and speak up in a loud unified voice to ensure patient choice. Please join and support their efforts. And please recruit any concerned colleagues in NY State (of any specialty) who might be interested in adding their voice to this effort.

The email for this committee is einbinder@aol.com

Thank You,

Carol Paras, M.D.
Pearl River, N.Y.
drcarolparas@gmail.com

PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

Mona Begum, MD (drmonabegum@gmail.com)

Dear West Hudson psychiatric society members, colleagues and friends:

I know many Psychiatrists including myself are disturbed by the denial of prescription drugs for our patients by insurance companies. It is time consuming to obtain authorization and therefore at times even inhibit us from prescribing newer drugs. Recently, I was denied generic Geodon for an adolescent patient I have been treating in a residential treatment center due to his insurance company’s policy “quantity limit recommendations.” He has been receiving Geodon 60mg, 3 caps/day for one year and they want me to lower the number of pills from 3 to 2, obviously to reduce the cost. My reaction is one of annoyance and then retrospection. How did we as a society got to this place that our health care system and the cost of medicine is so profit oriented? I looked into this and one answer is GREED.

Many of you read the recent news about Martin Shkreli, who gained notoriety earlier this year when his company, Turing Pharmaceuticals, increased the price of a drug used to treat AIDS patients from around $13.50 to $750. Mr. Shkreli has emerged as a symbol of pharmaceutical greed for acquiring a decades old drug and, overnight, raising the price 5000%.

Turing’s price increase is not an isolated example. While most of the attention on pharmaceutical prices has been on new drugs for diseases like cancer, Hepatitis C and
high cholesterol, there is also growing concern about huge price increases on older drugs, some of them generic that have long been mainstays of treatment.

Prescription drug spending is the third most expensive cost in our health care system. And spending seems to grow larger every year. Just last year, the average American got 12 prescriptions a year, as compared with 1992, when Americans got an average of seven prescriptions. In a decade and a half, the use of prescription medication went up 71 percent. This has added about $180 billion to our medical spending.

While there are more medicines on the market today than in 1992, researchers estimate that around 20 percent of the $180 billion increase has absolutely nothing to do with the number of medications available, or increases in the cost of that medication. To understand this change, one place to look is:

“An Advertising Revolution”

It used to work like this: Doctors decided what to prescribe. Drug companies — through medical advertisers — tried to influence doctors. Patients did what they were told.

The only problem, was that the system wasn't working out for the drug companies. For them, the system was much too slow.

And so a large medical advertising company came up with a solution: They would advertise directly to the patient. They'd get the patient to go in and ask the doctor for the drug.

There was only one small problem with this solution: It was almost impossible to do due to FDA regulations requiring that drug ads include both the name of a drug and its purpose, as well as information about all the side effects. But side-effect information often took two or three magazine pages of mouse print to catalog, and this wouldn't do for a major television campaign.

But then, in 1986, while designing an ad for a new allergy medication called Seldane, the medical advertising company hit on a way around the fine print.

They didn't give the drug's name, Seldane, all they said was: 'Your doctor now has treatment which won't make you drowsy. See your doctor.'

This was one of the very first national direct-to-consumer television ad campaigns. The results were nothing short of astounding. Before the ads, Seldane made about $34 million in sales a year, which at the time was considered pretty good. Their goal was maybe to get this drug up to $100 million in sales but eventually it went to $800 million.

Pharmaceutical companies took note.

Today, drug companies spend $4 billion a year on ads to consumers. The Nielsen Co. estimates that there's an average of 80 drug ads every hour of every day on American television. And those ads clearly produce results:
"Something like a third of consumers who've seen a drug ad have talked to their doctor about it," says Julie Donohue, a professor of public health at the University of Pittsburgh who is considered a leading expert on this subject.

"About two-thirds of those have asked for a prescription. And the majority of people who ask for a prescription have that request honored."

By taking their case to patients instead of doctors, drug companies increased the amount of money we spend on medicine in America.

The good news is the AMA calls for a ban on advertising directed at consumers. The vote reflects concerns among physicians about the negative impact of commercially driven promotions and the role that marketing costs play in fueling escalating drug prices. I believe APA also should join in since the cost of medicine affects the quality of treatment of our vulnerable patient population.

I welcome your ideas and exchanges. Our next meeting is on February 12, at 12:30 pm in Il Fresco restaurant in Orangeburg. I wish you happy New Year.

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Summary from Executive Council Meeting
Friday, January 8, 2016
Il Fresco, Orangeburg, NY

Attendees Present: Mona Begum, Nigel Bark, Jim Flax, Raj Mehta, Russ Tobe, Lois Kroplick, John Fogelman, Nick Batson (via phone) and Liz Burnich.

Spring 2016 Educational Meeting:
- Dr. Jon Stewart will be our speaker on the topic of Treatment Refractory Depression on Friday, May 6, 2016 at La Terrazza Restaurant, New City at 6pm.
- Liz needs to coordinate with the speaker to get course objectives to prepare CME and mailing.

Fall 2016 Educational Meeting:
- Jim Flax suggested reaching out to Jay Lombard from Genomind as a potential speaker for our fall meeting. All were in agreement that Jim will reach out to him to see if he is able and interested.
- We also discussed possibly having our fall meeting closer to Orange County. Some suggestions were Bear Mountain or some place in Central Valley. Liz will look into some prices and report back at our next meeting.

Remote hook-up with Dr. Nicholas Batson from Crystal Run Healthcare in Orange County
- Nick (and the other doctor's at Crystal Run Healthcare when available) would like to attend our Executive Committee meetings remotely (via phone) to help form closer ties between our Rockland and Orange County members.
- Crystal Run Healthcare in Middletown currently has 3 psychiatrists on staff that split time between adult and child psychiatric patients.
  - The 3 doctors currently are also on staff at Orange Regional Medical Center in
Middletown – don’t see patients there but consult with the ER.
- Crystal Run is currently building a new site in West Nyack, Rockland County and hope to have 2 more psychiatrists on staff at this location. Expected opening is summer 2016.
- Update on new psychiatric residency program at ORMC.
  - Training Director is Dr. Ulrick Vieux and there are currently 3 first year residents.
  - They are reviewing applications for next year – already have a pool of 40-50 applicants.
  - We will invite Dr. Vieux and the residents to join us for our next EC meeting.

Public Forum Update:
- Lois Kroplick is looking for suggestions on possible topics and potential speakers for the next Public Forum.

NYSPA Update:
- NYSPA is still working with the Justice Center. A meeting took place in November and official report/feedback from this meeting should be available in a few weeks.
- NYSPA is looking for cases where patients are being denied coverage or psychiatrists are being harassed for the United Healthcare case they are currently working on.
- Next NYSPA meeting is Saturday, March 12, 2016 at the LaGuardia Marriott.

Women’s Meeting:
- The next Women’s Meeting will take place on Jan 22nd at Madhu Ahluwalia’s office at 12:30pm.

Other Business Items:
- Raj informed everyone that Rockland Psychiatric Center is currently selecting the new Chief of Psychiatry. He will keep us posted when it becomes official.
- Nigel informed everyone that he is retiring in June from his position at Bronx Psychiatric as well as his private practice. He asked if any psychiatrist would be willing to take over his existing private practice patients.
- WHPS Website: discussion over the pros/cons of working with existing website vs. redesigning whole new site. After much back and forth, it was decided that Liz would update all the links and information on the existing site and then everyone will review site to determine next steps. Liz will email everyone with the website when it is up to date.
- NYSPA, WHPS and the Westchester Psychiatric Society will join forces to sponsor a VA educational event using a grant from the VA and support from PRMS. The event will take place on the evening of Wednesday, April 6, 2016. More details to follow.
- Liz is working with the APA to partner with them on re-branding.

Next Executive Council Meeting - Friday, February 12, 2016 at 12:30pm at Il Fresco, Orangeburg, NY.
January 2016

This monthly newsletter is prepared by APA’s Communications Team as a benefit for our District Branches and State Associations. If you have any questions, please contact James Carty at jcarty@psych.org or 703-907-8693. Want to keep up with APA in between newsletters? Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter (@APAPsychiatric) and LinkedIn for the latest news and updates.

What’s New at the APA

• On Dec. 11th, APA applauded the senate passage of the “Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act,” introduced by Senators Al Franken (D-Minn) and John Cornyn (R-Texas). The bill includes provisions that support APA’s mission of reducing the number of people with serious mental illness in our nation’s jails. You can read APA’s statement of support for the bill here.
• On Dec. 14th, APA President Renee Binder participated in a congressional briefing on the Medicaid IMD Exclusion. Dr. Binder led a panel that included former APA President Steve Sharfstein, Joe Parks, Missouri HealthNet director, and Mark Covall, President and CEO of NAPHS.
• The NIH received $32.1 billion in funding for medical research in the year-end budget deal, fully funding Precision Medicine and BRAIN initiatives, and providing a major boost for Alzheimer’s and cancer research. APA is a steadfast supporter of NIH and funding for medical research.
• APA Members are encouraged to urge their member of Congress to protect patient safety in mental health treatment by opposing the Medicare Mental Health Access Act (H.R. 4277). The bill would define psychologists as “physicians” under Medicare, a designation that does not equate to the medical education residency training undergone by Medical Doctors. Click here to encourage your Member of Congress to oppose the bill.

Mark Your Calendar

• National Stalking Awareness Month (January)
• National Winter Sports TBI Awareness Month (January)
• APA Election Voting Opens Jan. 4

Voting for APA Elections to Open Jan. 4
The final slate of candidates has been set, and the voting for the most visible leadership positions at the APA will commence on Jan. 4th. Voting will remain open until the deadline on Feb. 1 at 11:59 p.m. ET. For more information on the candidates and voting process, please visit APA’s Elections page.

APA Annual Meeting 2016 Registration Now Open
Early Bird registration rates for APA Annual Meeting 2016 are available for members and non-members until Feb. 4th. Register today and save! You can find more information on registration and key dates for the Annual Meeting here.

Legal Information and Consultation Available to APA Members
As one of your member benefits, APA has an agreement with Anne Marie "Nancy" Wheeler, J.D., to offer confidential triage consultation on practice-related issues to APA members at a preferred rate. She will also provide names of local counsel when your issue requires representation or an opinion based on your state's law. All plan options include a quarterly e-newsletter that covers
legal issues related to the practice of psychiatry and includes an FAQ section. (This plan is not available to members residing or practicing in North Carolina.) For more information, click HERE.

Apply to Be a Fellow of the APA
http://paracom.paramountcommunication.com/ct/29851052-28615301514;m:1:512615366;650664BDADF1A5C06A8B2E248D71E3E67;8
Take your psychiatric career to the next level and become a FELLOW of APA. Fellow status is an honor that reflects your dedication to the work of APA and signifies your allegiance to the psychiatric profession. It's easy to apply. Download and complete the APPLICATION FOR FELLOWSHIP before Sept. 1 and be recognized by your colleagues as a member of this select group at the 2017 annual meeting.

Put Your Newly-Branded APA VISA Card to Work for You
Support APA and earn cash back at the same time. With your BankAmericard Cash Rewards™ Visa Signature© credit card for APA, updated with our new logo, APA members get 1 percent cash back on purchases, 2 percent at grocery stores, and 3 percent on gas for the first $1,500 in combined grocery store and gas purchases each quarter. Plus, get a $100 cash rewards bonus after making at least $500 in purchases within the first 90 days! Click here for more information.

PRIVATE PRACTICE: FEES Here is a link to a legal public site where you can look up fees for a given zip code. http://www.fairhealthconsumer.org/

PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS If you are frequently bothered with cumbersome and seemingly unnecessary requests for prior authorizations, the APA is eager to hear from you: Ellen Jaffe, Director, Practice Management HelpLine/Medicare Specialist, Office of Healthcare Systems and Financing, American Psychiatric Association, (703) 907-8591 ejaffe@psych.org Practice Management Helpline (800-343-4671) - email at hsf@psych.org. Also, one of our members posted to an international list-serv with regard to any denial of benefit, so I quote Dr. John Fogelman:

The URL below will direct you to a database for the regional CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) headquarters. The names of the regional Medical Directors are listed. When you call, hang in through all the options, and at the end type in the name of the medical director. You will get either the real live doc, an assistant, leave a message, or the name of someone to call for in an emergency. It usually works.

http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/sharedsavingsprogram/Regional_Contacts.html

My experience has been that the higher you go in any organization (hospital, government, insurance companies), the closer you are to the decision maker, and the decision makers do not have to stay on the unvarying mindless script. They do not instruct you to have a good day, apologize for your inconvenience, thank you profusely and hear how they know how valuable your
time is. They usually listen, and if you do not scream at them, a favorable result often follows.

**PARITY ENFORCEMENT FROM NYSPA:** If you missed the NYSPA Webinar on parity I strongly suggest you listen to it; accessible on the NYSPA website. Seth Stein and Rachel Fernbach have presented a packet of wonderful new tools that potentially will allow us to better manage and respond aggressively to insurance company efforts to restrict care.

**PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO RETURN PHONE CALLS. EVEN IF YOU HAVE NO ROOM IN YOUR SCHEDULE FOR NEW PATIENTS:** I have frequently heard complaints about patients leaving voice mails with psychiatrist’s offices and never getting a return phone call. If true, this reflects very poorly on our profession.

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**Psychiatry/Psychotherapy Office for Rent**

Saturday all day, Sunday after 10:30
Route 45, Pomona
Shared Waiting Room, Wheelchair Accessible, Wall-to-Wall Windows,
Private Bath, Full Sound Insulation, Separate Entrance/Exit
Call Lorraine Schorr, MSW 354-5040

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**Depression Support Group**

Depression support group meets 2 times a month in Pomona, NY. We are inviting new members at this time. We are moderated by a clinical social worker. This is not a therapy group but social support for people fighting depression. Call Kathy for more information (914) 714-2837.

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**Rockland County Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**

Peer-to-peer run support group for people with depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder or any related mood disorder & their friends & family. The support group meets every Thursday night from 6:30 - 8:30 at Jawonio, inc. 775 N Main St. New Hempstead. Reservations are not required. There is no fee for attending the support group meetings. This is a very warm and welcoming group run by people who have been there and can help. Any questions please call Leslie or Leonard at 845-837-1182.