

EMORY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES KUDOS  
AUGUST 2025

**REMEMBER**

**Please send me your accomplishments, program/team activities, and personal updates for the September 2025 Kudos**

**SAVE THE DATES**

**Upcoming Faculty Development Seminar**

The next two faculty development seminars will be held on

- Wednesday September 17, 2025 from 9:00-10:30am
- Wednesday November 19, 2025 from 9:00-10:30am

**Upcoming Writing Groups**

The Faculty Writing Group is the first Wednesday of every month from 8:00-9:00am. These meetings are on [Zoom](#). This group is for faculty including adjunct faculty.

**SPOTLIGHTS**

**FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Raegan Hanlon, PsyD**

Raegan Hanlon is currently an assistant professor in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Raegan also serves on the Emory Faculty Development Committee, as well as co-chairs the Integrated Care/Health Psych/CL psych peer mentoring meetings. Outside of Emory, she is a clinical psychologist, health focused with the VA health care system.

The most rewarding and enjoyable aspect of Raegan's job is offering direct patient care. Providing emotional support and coping strategies to Veterans during one of the most challenging periods of their lives — living with a serious illness — is profoundly meaningful. She values the opportunity to enhance their quality of life by helping manage physical symptoms, improve emotional well-being, discover meaning in their journey and find peace and acceptance in how their lives have changed. Through this work, she is privileged to witness the remarkable resilience of individuals, which serves as a wonderful reminder to cherish life and appreciate the small moments.

Key highlights of Raegan's career trajectory include establishing and developing the Bereavement Program and Psycho-oncology program at the Miami VA, as well as establishing and developing the psycho-oncology program at the Atlanta VA. She has established strong relationships with medical oncology, radiation oncology, ENT and speech pathology. She is in the process of building relationships with the tele-oncology program. She facilitates four cancer support groups and offers individual psychotherapy to Veterans who have been impacted by cancer. She is also trained in meaning centered psychotherapy and HeartMath.

Raegan's goals for the future are to integrate more HeartMath and meditation practices into her clinical practice. She also hopes to foster relationships with other specialty

medical services like urology to offer more support to Veterans who are living with and have been impacted by cancer

Raegan's life outside of work revolves around her daughter, son and husband. They enjoy playing games, reading, spending time in the sun-usually swimming and going on adventures around the city and country. They are anticipating a trip to Curaçao to swim with the sea turtles. She is also active on their school's Foundation, assisting with teacher-funded programs and fundraising. When Raegan has a moment to herself, she enjoys exercising, cooking, reading and playing Mahjong.

### **ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Lissa Davis, PhD**

After doctoral training in Boston and several years of experience in community mental health and residential settings, Lissa Davis began a solo outpatient practice in downtown Decatur drawing on ACT, DBT and CBT, and focusing on anxiety and OCD. The practice strives to support access to psychotherapy across income levels as well as affirmation for those of diverse or minoritized identities.

As an adjunct faculty member, Lissa provides supervision to Med Psych Residents during OPTP psychotherapy rotations and serves as a member of the Adjunct Faculty Workgroup. Lissa particularly enjoys collaborating with Med Psych residents to find agile and innovative ways to use ACT principles during brief patient encounters.

After work, Lissa feels fortunate to be able to study music with West African teachers living both locally and overseas. Her favorite instrument, the kora, is associated with catharsis, storytelling and mediation in West Africa, and the study of it has become an important part of Lissa's own mental health routine.

### **STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Rakiyah Johnson, MPH, CHES**

Rakiyah Johnson is the Assistant Director of Wellbeing, Resilience and Flourishing at Emory at Grady, and directly supports Nadine Kaslow. In this role, she creates initiatives to strengthen wellbeing, foster team connection and form a culture of care among faculty, APPs, learners and staff. She assists with developing programs that encompass peer support, team debriefings, arts-based engagement, continuing education, research and creative ways that empower individuals and teams to flourish. She collaborates with individuals from across departments and divisions to embed culturally responsive, informed and equity-conscious practices into our well-being efforts for our community. Rakiyah LOVES her job, and the people with whom she has the pleasure of working. She most enjoys creating spaces where people feel safe to show up as they are. Whether through group reflection, creative expression or structured support, she is motivated to help people reconnect with themselves and each other to continue their missions. She carries a personal mantra of simply wanting to show up where she is needed and finds deep fulfillment in doing that work alongside others who care as much as she does.

Prior to Rakiyah's current role, she served as the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Research Programs at Emory College, where she developed cross-disciplinary

initiatives focused on mentorship, reflection and research identity development. She holds an MPH in Behavioral Sciences and Health Education from Emory Rollins and is a Certified Health Education Specialist. Early in her career, Rakiyah served as a health coach in a hope-based intervention rooted in positive psychology for young adult cancer survivors — an experience that deeply shaped her interest in the intersection of chronic illness, identity and behavior change. She is a first author on a peer-reviewed publication examining physical activity among cancer survivors in partnership with American Cancer Society. In addition to a genuine interest, these experiences laid the foundation for her ongoing work and affinity for impactful programming based on evidence-based practices for the health and wellbeing of others.

Rakiyah's long-term goal is to pursue formal training and work in health psychology, with a focus on the lived experience of chronic illness and how emotional, social, and behavioral factors shape wellbeing. She hopes to continue building inclusive programs that center reflection, empowerment and creative expression. She plans to partner with organizations doing meaningful advocacy work around chronic illness, disability and health equity, and volunteer toward structural change wherever she can. Whether in a hospital, community space or creative project, she simply wants to show up where she is needed and support others in feeling more empowered, connected and whole.

Outside of work, Rakiyah is passionate about visual art, music and creative storytelling, both as personal practices and tools for healing and reflection. She believes art has a unique ability to give form to experiences that don't always have language — especially for those living with illness or navigating complex situations. She is active in advocacy for chronic illness and enjoys designing resources that help others manage complexities associated with that experience, communicate their needs and feel seen in the spaces they are a part. Outside of this, she loves long walks, Pilates, ice cream dates, long conversations with friends, cooking meals for people she cares about and experiencing moments that leave space to pause and breathe however they come.

### **TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT: Natalie Malone, MS**

Natalie Malone is a Psychology Intern at Emory University School of Medicine. As part of the trauma track, she is completing a year-long major rotation with the Nia Project, an outpatient program affiliated with Grady Health System (GHS). One of her favorite aspects of the internship at Emory is working in diverse settings. In addition to GHS, Natalie provides psychological support to individuals referred to the Emory Needlestick Prevention Center. She also has a minor rotation focusing on couples and family therapy through the Nia Project and the Ponce De Leon Center. Lastly, she is a member of the Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice Committee.

Outside of Emory, some of Natalie's recent roles and responsibilities included a 2025 traineeship in advanced data analysis as part of the Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning Consortium to Advance Health Equity and Research Diversity. Additionally, she coordinated and co-presented a symposium with sexuality researcher and educator Shemeka Thorpe and clinical psychologist Praise Iyiewuare on qualitative methods as a

radical pleasure intervention against anti-Black sexology at the 27th Congress of the World Association for Sexual Health.

Currently, Natalie holds committee and team member roles on research projects affiliated with the University of Kentucky, University of Pennsylvania, University of Washington and International Society for Sexual Medicine. These projects capture her interests in Whole Person Health (or \*wholistic wellness) and sexual/reproductive health while centering racially/ethnically marginalized groups and sexual and gender minorities. Additionally, she is involved in the American Psychological Association, SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective and Intersectionality Collective.

In 2022, Natalie co-authored a book chapter in *The Handbook on Counseling African American Women: Psychological Symptoms, Treatments and Case Studies* with Emory-based counseling psychologists Candice Hargons and Chesmore Montique. She described her contribution as a love letter to women of African diasporic descent. At that stage of her training, she committed herself to the culturally responsive treatment and care of Black women. Now, in 2025, she is grateful for and enjoys the many opportunities she has through her work to care for and advocate with Black women of diverse sexual and gender identities. Natalie's work enables her to fulfill this commitment and embody a genuine praxis of scholarship and practice that benefits everyone she encounters.

Key graduate training highlights for Natalie include completing over 1,200 hours of direct clinical work in diverse mental health settings, publishing more than 50 articles in scientific journals and delivering over 20 presentations nationally and internationally. Some additional highlights include receiving the Interdisciplinary Minority Fellowship through the APA Minority Fellowship Program and 2023 Annual Prize for Psychological Research on Women and Gender by Students, awarded by APA Division 35 and Association for Women in Psychology. She has also provided social justice-oriented consultation and training for national and global educational platforms and corporations, including Embodied Philosophy, Microsoft and Viacom. While these highlights are meaningful, Natalie's most cherished moments thus far have been receiving feedback from a patient, client or research participant that they felt seen through her provision of care, writing or presentation.

Looking to the future, Natalie is interested in a position at an Academic Health Center that will enable her to continue providing clinical services, develop her line of research and support trainees in their professional development. Additionally, she will provide counseling and consultation services through her business. The combination of these endeavors will enhance Natalie's ability to establish a comprehensive, culturally responsive and accessible wellness center grounded in and committed to Black feminist praxis. Two key efforts of her center and research will be (1) developing wholistic and SRH treatments that support individuals while centering their culture and (2) advocating for systemic and structural changes in health and wellness.

Outside of work, Natalie is a certified Yoga and Hot Pilates instructor, as well as a wellness business owner. When she is not in yoga class (which is often!), she nurtures herself through reading, traveling with her family, spending time near natural water sources and savoring the rich flavors of new foods, coffees and teas.

**MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: Jeffrey Rakofsky, MD** *(Written by Reema Dedania, MD, MPH, Michael Lucido, MD, MPH and David Thylur, MD)*

**Michael:**

As a mentor, Jeffrey is open, approachable and genuinely invested in the success of those he supports. He has a gift for identifying the unique strengths of his mentees and helping them envision a clear path toward their long-term career goals. His style is both non-judgmental and encouraging, creating an atmosphere of psychological safety that makes it easy to seek his guidance, even in difficult situations. Many of us have benefitted from his practical advice, whether it was the importance of keeping promotions criteria and teaching portfolios in mind early on, or the reminder that growth requires stepping outside of our comfort zones. Not to be confined to a role in advisement, he also creates opportunities. Through his mentorship, we've gained experiences such as co-authorship, chapter writing, networking at institutional and national meetings and even the confidence to deliver grand rounds lectures at other institutions. His support is both thoughtful and actionable, and his role as a mentor has had a lasting impact on our professional development. We are fortunate to have him as a resource, advocate and role model within our department.

**Reema:**

As a mentor, Jeffrey has been very open and approachable. He uses a strengths-based approach to help a mentee identify longer-term career goals and then illuminate what the path to get there could look like based on your specific aptitudes. I've appreciated the non-judgmental tone that he strikes in our meetings, and he is very effective at providing encouragement in difficult situations. He does a good job creating "psychological safety" in the mentoring relationship. One specific way Jeff's mentorship impacted me was by helping me find ways to develop my ability to assist rising M4s with career advising and navigating the residency application process, which has been a rewarding part of my work. As far as a specific piece of advice, he encouraged me to keep the promotions criteria in the back of my mind as I work on career development, and more specifically to understand what the teaching portfolio entailed so I could periodically update it rather than having to scramble years later trying to remember everything I had done that needed to be included.

**David:**

Jeffrey has been a steadfast mentor and supporter of my development within the department. He provided thoughtful, constructive feedback when I asked him about career advancement opportunities in a way that was supportive and not critical. When I met with him, he reminded me that although there is always a fear of failing at something, you will not succeed at all unless you put yourself out there and try. He encouraged me to go beyond the scope of what might feel comfortable for me and to try new things. This led to me giving two separate grand rounds lectures at institutions

around the country, which I was motivated to ask for after speaking with him. We are lucky to have him in our department as a resource and as a role model for junior faculty.

**PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Integrated Behavioral Health at Grady** *(Written by Marsha Stern, MD)*

Grady's Integrated Behavioral Health Program uses the Collaborative Care Model (CoCM) to provide evidence-based treatments for depressive disorders and anxiety disorders within the primary care setting. The program was developed to increase access to behavioral health services for Grady's primary care population and improve access to psychiatric consultation.

The CoCM framework is unique because it requires all members of the care team (patient, licensed therapist, primary care provider and the consulting psychiatrist) to work together and take on different roles than in traditional settings.

The keystone of the team is the care manager, the licensed behavioral therapist, who works directly with the patient and located in the primary care clinic. The care manager also works closely with the consulting psychiatrists and primary care providers to ensure there is communication between members of the team.

The Integrated Behavioral Health team at Grady collaborates closely with faculty in the department of internal medicine and with colleagues at Park Place in the department of psychiatry. The program has expanded outside of primary care clinics to include care managers in the burn center and cancer center.

There has been a long history of integrated care at Grady but the program in its current form was started in 2018 with generous funding from the Sparks Foundation. You can learn more about the Collaborative Care Model at the [AIMS Center website](#). There was also a [news release](#) about the program when it started in 2018.

**WELLNESS COMMITTEE**

**The Wellness Committee is recruiting members!**

If you have an interest in helping others, make better lifestyle choices and create a culture of wellness, we need you! We're looking for members in the Department who are available to meet at least once a month.

Contact [Elizabeth McCord](#) and [Rachel Ammirati](#) if interested.

**FACULTY KUDOS**

**Major Leadership Appointments, Activities and Achievements**

Negar Fani was appointed Chair of the American College of Neuropsychology Women's Committee (recently renamed Empowerment Committee).

Tomina Schwenke is the Chair of the Criminal Justice Section of the Division of Public Service (18) of the American Psychological Association

Jennifer Stevens is now Chair of the National Institute of Health Neural Basis of Psychopathology, Addictions and Sleep Disorders Study Section.

Laura Watkins was appointed the Chair of the Clinical Directory and Referral Issues Committee of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.

### **Research**

Attell BK, Snyder AB, Coles CD, & Kable JA (2025) Comorbidities associated with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in the United States. *Nature: Scientific Reports*, 15, 29704.

Cao, Quyen BS\*; Kable, Julie PhD†. A Systematic Study on Prenatal Opioid Exposure: A Review of Neurodevelopmental Consequences. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics* (>):10.1097/DBP.0000000000001407, August 15, 2025. | DOI: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000001407

Dernbach MR, Hon S, Lopez G, Kaslow NJ, Carpenter JE, Tanner K, Rucker-Wright A, Peel D, Corley A, Soli RD, Moran TP, Morgan BW, Filkins P, Whitaker G, Conaway E, Cibulas B, Arkin S, Arnold D, & Geller RJ. (2025). [Managing mental health crisis calls received by a US Poison Center: A statewide collaboration between the Georgia Poison Center, 911, and 988](#). *American Journal of Public Health*.

Goldsmith, DR, Yuan, QE, Addington, J, Bearden, CE, Cadenhead, KS, Cannon TD, Carrion, RE, Keshavan M, Mathalon DH, Perkins DO, Stone WS, Tsuang MT, Woods SW, Walker EF, Ku BS (2025). The moderating role of lifetime social engagement on the relationship between C-reactive protein and negative symptoms among young adults at clinical risk for psychosis. *Brain Behavior Immunology*, 129, 890-897.

Ku BS, Young JW. [Social environment as a determinant of mismatch negativity in early psychosis](#). *Neuropsychopharmacol.* (2025)

Palitsky R, Captari LE, Maples-Keller JL, Peacock C, Rupert D, Kaplan DM, Stavros G, Grant GH, & Sandage SJ. (2025). [Applying relational spirituality to develop spiritual and religious competencies in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy training](#). *Psychotherapy*. Advance online publication.

Treadway MT, [A shared circuit might link depression and anxiety](#). *Science* 389,778-779(2025).

Varghese JS, Goldsmith DR, Cotes RO, Ravikumar V, Ali MK, Pasquel FJ. (2025). Weight change from incretin-based weight loss medications across categories of second-generation antipsychotics. *Int J Obes (Lond)*.

### **Honors, Awards, Rankings**

The Center for Visual and Neurocognitive Rehabilitation (CVNR) at the VA is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Under the direction of Joe Nocera and now Sheila Rauch, the CVNR has been a VA funded research center for 40 years. The CVNR recently hosted an anniversary event that included speakers, demo and awards presentation.

Jordan Cattie has been accepted to the International OCD Foundation Training Institute Faculty. As Training Institute faculty, she is among a pool of vetted clinicians that BTTI Clinical Directors and IOCDF staff invite to participate in IOCDF training programs.

Jessica Maples-Keller was selected as a delegate for the transatlantic leadership network British-American Project. The fellowship includes over 1,200 members who from a broad spectrum of occupations, backgrounds and political views

Weibo Niu was awarded the 2025 Brain & Behavior Research Foundation Young Investigator Grant (NARSAD Young Investigator Grant) for “Leveraging human iPSC-derived brain organoids and advanced computational tools to uncover therapeutic targets for 22q11.2 deletion syndrome.”

Barbara Rothbaum received a Presidential Citation from Division 56.

Jennifer Stevens is an MPI with Raj Morey on a new R01 entitled “The structural and functional architecture of cortico-cerebellar systems in posttraumatic stress disorder.”

Beth-Sara Wright is serving a six-week residency in Brisbane, Australia, as Professor-in-Residence with the Anglican Schools Commission, leading workshops across multiple regions, engaging educators and administrators and delivering the keynote at the national Anglican Schools Australia Conference on dignity, identity and mental health.

### **Media**

Andy Miller (1) NewScientist | [Chronic inflammation messes with your mind. Here's how to calm it.](#)

### **Presentations**

Belinda McIntosh (1) presented during a webinar hosted by Labor Campaign for Single Payer entitled [Medicare Advantage and the Privatization of Healthcare: What Unions Need to Know](#) (2) participated in a workshop for medical students titled Physicians for a National Health Program Northern New England Internship for Medical Students with a panel discussion on hospital closures and the impact on public health.

Barabar Rothbaum (1) presented Psychedelics and Clinical Health Psychology at Division 12 - Society of Clinical Psychology (2) participated in the Presidential Panel entitled: Evolving the Practice of Trauma Psychology: Innovative Treatments and Emerging Trends at Division 56.



Ann Schwartz presented “Autonomy, Risk and Refusal: Ethical Challenges in Capacity Assessment” at the Emory Healthcare Ethics Grand Rounds.

### **TRAINEE KUDOS**

A symposium titled "Support and Identity: Exploring risk and protective factors for health among low-income Black women" was presented at the American Psychological Association. The presenters were Meredith Blackwell, Hannah Lee, Da'Mere Wilson, Ace Ogbebor and Brittini Fleming. Nadine Kaslow served as the discussant for the panel.

Punita Peketi was accepted into the Emory University Psychoanalytic Institute.

Syed Fayzan Rab (1) HCP Live | [Psilocybin plus meaning-centered psychotherapy eases cancer depression](#).

### **ADJUNCT FACULTY**

Melanie Bliss just completed two consecutive terms totaling six years on the Central Outreach and Advocacy Center Board, with three of those years as Board Chair. This nonprofit provides essential services to people who are unhoused, such as birth certificates and Georgia IDs, job training, city and state advocacy and assistance with housing.

Julie Dorney, Lisa Huber, Jim Andrews and Brian Thomas received Employer Patriot Awards from the Department of Defense. In addition, their company, Peachtree Psychiatry and Peachtree Comprehensive Health received a Department of Defense Above and Beyond Award. The psychiatrists and staff showed extensive practice support for one of their psychiatrists, David Halverson, while he was deployed in Kosovo for six months. They were honored to give back for his service to our country and to support him and his family.

### **STAFF KUDOS**

Lindy Carbone became a board-certified diplomate in clinical social work from the American Board of Clinical Social Work.