EMORY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES KUDOS DECEMBER 2024

REMEMBER

Please send me your accomplishments, program/team activities, and personal updates for the December 2024 Kudos

SAVE THE DATES

UPCOMING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

The next Faculty Development Seminar is:

- Wednesday March 19, 2025 from 9-10:30am Becoming a Consultant
- Wednesday May 21, 2025 from 9-10:30am Promotion Readiness: Writing Your Personal Statement

WRITING GROUPS: UPCOMING

The Faculty Writing Group is the first Wednesday of every month from 8:00-9:00am. However, there will not be a writing group in September. These meetings are on **Zoom**. This group is for faculty including adjunct faculty.

SPOTLIGHTS

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Erin Elliott, PhD

Erin Elliott is an Assistant Professor and Senior Psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. She is a member of the department's Faculty Development Committee and the Committee on Clinical Distinctions.

As a Deputy Chief of Mental Health at the Atlanta VA Health Care System, Erin supports the Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health, facility leadership team and entire service line in areas of management, including the leadership and oversight of clinical, administrative, quality performance, educational and supervisory activities.

Erin is board-certified in Clinical Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP). She serves on the ABPP Foundation and will become Vice Chair in January. Erin is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA), APA's Division 18 Psychologists in Public Service, Association of VA Psychologist Leaders and Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers. Additionally, she is a member and fellow of the Georgia Psychological Association (GPA). She previously chaired GPA's Gender and Sexual Diversity Directorate and the Ethnic Minority Affairs Directorate.

Erin enjoys collaborating with her talented and deeply committed colleagues from across disciplines on trainings and initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of veterans, especially veterans with marginalized identities. In addition to appreciating the products of such initiatives, Erin appreciates the associated learning, inspiration, hope and excitement that comes with such collaborative work.

If Erin had to identify one consistent highlight of every week, it would be her cofacilitation with a certified peer specialist of a motivational interviewing group on the inpatient unit. At the end of every group, she feels a renewed connection to the reasons why she pursued a career as a psychologist and the values that inform her approach to therapeutic work.

Highlights in Erin's career include her promotion to Clinical Director of General Mental Health and, more recently, to Deputy Chief of Mental Health. Erin is proud of her work with program development and system redesign. A highlight of such work was during the COVID-19 pandemic. Atlanta VA Health Care System led national performance measures with telehealth expansion. At that time, Erin was a clinical director for two large mental health clinics. From a partnership of innovative and strategic thinkers who were solution-oriented and willing to go the extra mile to see positive outcomes come to fruition quickly, her teams shifted from having no virtual groups prior to COVID-19 to having 25 virtual groups in the Summer 2020 and 61 by the end of the pandemic (Spring of 2023).

Erin has many career goals and plans. Some of these include further building collaborations across different service areas to improve efficiency and effectiveness of care, enhancing veteran experience of care, improving mental health equity, preventing suicide, increasing postvention services, expanding clinical services specific to family and couples and reducing stigma.

Outside of work, Erin enjoys spending time with her family, traveling and being outdoors. Erin has a goal to run a half marathon in every state, and she was happy to have her family cheering her on as she recently completed a half marathon in her twenty-fifth state.

ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Tammy Nguyen, MD

Tammy Nguyen is a board-certified general and child and adolescent psychiatrist. She completed residency at the University of Florida and fellowship at Emory University. She is now serve as an attending psychiatrist for the Willowbrooke child and adolescent partial hospitalization program. In addition, she has an outpatient clinic at Willowbrooke where she offers medication management for patients ranging from 5 years old to young adulthood. She also provides on-call coverage at CHOA - Scottish Rite and AMB for the consult service. Tammy enjoys working in a variety of settings but ultimately her passion is in community health, serving the underserved populations, and being a part of a multidisciplinary team to provide well-rounded care.

As an adjunct faculty member, Tammy provides supervision for psychiatry residents and child and adolescent psychiatry fellows from Emory and Morehouse schools of medicine. As an early career psychiatrist, she strives to serve as a resource for trainees as they develop their identity as a physician. She also hopes to provide them with experience and exposure to different clinical settings and levels of care. She tries to assign cases that tailor to the individual's interest and thoroughly enjoy discussions of complex cases to explore different interventions.

Outside of work, Tammy enjoys spending time in nature with her cat and her fiancé. She loves traveling to new countries and exploring different cultures. She spent a semester of college at sea on a ship traveling to 11 countries!

TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT: Eric Galante, MD

Eric Galante currently serves as a co-chief resident at Grady Memorial Hospital alongside his wonderful co-chief, Mackenzie Jones. He is also currently a member of the Emory psychotherapy track, a two-year track that allows for psychiatry residents to have extra therapy patients and supervisors to expand psychotherapy knowledge. He has been heavily involved in resident recruitment, serving as recruitment chair for two years. Lastly, he completed the GME medical education track and currently working on two projects with psychiatry faculty related to medical education with other residency specialty programs.

Eric has recently become a member of the Nia Project team, providing individual therapy for a patient in the program. He also still acts as an advisor for Prescribe it Forward, a national non-profit he helped establish in 2020, dedicated to connecting premed students with medical student mentors to assist with the medical school application process. Prior to residency, he helped establish a mental health team within a preexisting free clinic to provide mental health support to the underserved population in Indianapolis. He also created a Best Buddies chapter at his medical school in order to connect those with intellectual and developmental disabilities with medical students.

What Eric most enjoys about his work is a cliche (but true) answer - his patients. He learns more from them than any book or lecture he has had, and while some days can be tough, Eric is always thankful he is in a field where he gets to meet so many unique people. He is also grateful for his coresidents who have gotten him through the past three-and-a-half years by making life fun both at and outside of work.

An earlier career highlight for Eric was helping to create Prescribe it Forward during peak-covid in medical school. He was also very grateful to have matched at Emory for residency and for all the people he has come across since starting here - from coresidents to mentors and patients. Throughout residency, a few highlights have been serving as recruitment chair and now co-chief resident at Grady where he is able to work with the amazing intern class.

Post-residency, Eric plans to stay in academic medicine, working either in an inpatient or emergency setting alongside both students and residents. Long-term, he hopes to work in an outpatient setting, allowing him to more easily incorporate both psychotherapy and psychopharmacology into patient visits.

Outside of work, Eric loves spending time with his fiancé, Michaella, and their dog George. He likes to hang out with friends and family, travel, eat at all the best restaurants and play board games. He also dabbles with piano and slowly picking up a new hobby in photography.

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: Jennifer Wootten, MD (written by Marsha Stern, MD, MPH) Jennifer Wootten, MD is an exceptional mentor whose approachability and openness create a welcoming environment for all who seek her guidance. Her office door is always open, literally and figuratively, inviting faculty, staff, and trainees to engage in meaningful dialogue, whether it's to ask questions or to navigate challenging patient interactions.

One of Jennifer's standout qualities is her ability to handle ethical dilemmas with a level of thoughtfulness and grace that is truly rare. She possesses a balanced perspective, allowing her to see the humanity in every situation, which fosters a sense of trust and respect among her mentees.

Throughout the years, Jennifer has shared invaluable advice on how to address patients who may be inappropriate or crossing boundaries. She emphasizes the importance of never worrying alone, encouraging trainees and faculty alike to reach out for support and guidance when faced with such challenging encounters. Her insights often include strategies for maintaining professionalism while asserting boundaries, helping her mentees find a balance between empathy and firmness.

Jennifer provides feedback that is both gentle and constructive, ensuring that her insights are not only helpful but also encouraging. She shares her wealth of experiences with generosity, enriching the learning journey of those around her. Her mentorship style embodies a perfect blend of support and guidance, making her an invaluable resource and an inspiration to everyone she works with.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: VA's Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program

(written by Bethany Ketchen, PhD, and Monique Hunter, PhD)
The Atlanta VA HCS Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (DRRTP) is a 61-bed, coed, time-limited rehabilitation program that offers evidence-based clinical care for Veterans experiencing homelessness, mental health and/or substance use disorders. The program provides a strong emphasis on psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery services with the aim of working collaboratively with Veterans to achieve identified treatment goals.

There are two program areas:

- 1. Domiciliary Care for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness (DCHV) that serves Veterans who have a clinical need for psychosocial residential rehabilitation.
- 2. Substance Use Disorder Domiciliary (Dom SUD), which provides intensive, evidence-based substance use treatment for Veterans who need the structure of a residential treatment program.

The Domiciliary Care Program is VA's oldest health care program. Established through legislation passed in the 1860s, the purpose of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was to provide a home for soldiers of the Civil War. Once the VA was established in 1932, the National Homes were converted to domiciliary care to provide services to economically disadvantaged Veterans. In 1995, domiciliary care

began its shift toward the current mission, which is to provide residential treatment services for Veterans with mental health and substance use disorders, medical concerns and/or psychosocial needs.

Without a doubt, what makes the program unique and separates it from others like it is the TEAM. In addition to the expertise of the team members, there is a genuine commitment to maintaining a program culture emphasizing recovery, self-care and a belief that recovery should include fun! The program has a very active staff social committee that plans celebrations and potlucks throughout the year and a very active leisure education program, which aims to provide Veterans with opportunities to reconnect to old interests and explore new ones. Throughout the year, Veterans in the Domiciliary attend equestrian therapy, swim with whale sharks at the Georgia Aquarium, attend major sporting events, theater and engage in other recreation activities (e.g., fishing, golfing, hiking, etc).

The program has a very rich and talented multidisciplinary team including psychiatry, 24/7 nursing, social work, psychology, pharmacy, nutrition, chaplaincy, vocational rehabilitation, recreation therapy, peer support and administrative program support.

The breadth of expertise across the clinical team members, and the commitment of administrative program support, ensures the Veterans receive timely service and wraparound care.

We receive some of our biggest support for Veterans through the Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE; formerly Voluntary Services). Many of the Veterans enter the program with only the items on their person. CDCE provides gift cards for clothing items and connects the program to organizations that provide coats, hygiene products and housing kits (e.g., pots and pans, small appliances, etc.) to support Veterans in the program's care.

DRRTP partners with outpatient programs focusing on the treatment of SUD and PTSD to both provide continuity of services and trauma focused treatment, respectively. The program regularly partners with Women Veterans' Program to ensure it is creating a treatment environment that meets the needs of women and Suicide Prevention to provide education to staff and Veterans about safety planning.

More recent partnerships include Whole Health, who led a lunch and learn focused on work-life balance and who have begun offering a weekly Tai Chi class open to staff and Veterans.

Veterans can self-refer to the Domiciliary. Veterans can call the program directly at (404-321)-6111 x394790. DRRTP will provide information about the program, enter the consult, and get the Veteran into care.

Team members are always happy to share information about the Domiciliary with the department and love a good tour. If you would like to schedule a program tour or

coordinate a time for a call, you are welcome to contact Bethany Ketchen directly via email. If you know a Veteran who might benefit from the program's services, the easiest way to contact is by calling (404) 321-6111 x394790.

NEW FACULTY

Weibo Niu, PhD – Weibo Niu is a new Instructor in our department. He earned his PhD in Biology from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. From 2016-2017, he was a visiting PhD student in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory under the supervision of Zhexing Wen. In February 2020, Weibo joined Zhexing's laboratory to pursue postdoctoral training under his mentorship. Over the past five years at Emory, he has focused on using human induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC) models to investigate the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying neuropsychiatric disorders and neurodevelopmental disorders, including Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (TSC) and 22q11.2 Deletion Syndrome (22q11.2 DS).

Weibo not only honed his skills in cell biology, molecular biology and bioinformatics analysis of multi-omics datasets, but also expanded his knowledge and technical base with the use of human iPSC models in neuropsychiatric disorders studies. On the one hand, Weibo employed 3-dimensional cortical organoids derived from iPSCs from TSC patients harboring TSC2 variants, alongside organoids from age- and sex-matched healthy individuals as controls. This study demonstrates TSC2 pathogenic variants disrupt the neurodevelopmental trajectories through perturbations of gene regulatory networks during early cortical development, leading to mitochondrial dysfunction, aberrant neurofilament formation, impaired synaptic formation and compromised neuronal network activity. On the other hand, Weibo generated human microglia from iPSCs from a TSC patient cohort. Through extensive multi-omic and cellular analysis of TSC microglia, including transcriptomics, proteomics/phosphoproteomics and lipidomics, their research unveiled the molecular and cellular abnormalities in TSC microglia affecting neuronal development and function, and highlighted the mTOR-LPL pathway as a novel potential therapeutic target for the neuropathology of TSC. Additionally, he was awarded the 2023 TSC International Research Conference Travel Award by the TSC Alliance. More recently, he received the TSC Alliance Research Grant Award to further investigate the pathological roles of microglia in TSC. He plans to continue advancing his research into the pathogenesis of neuropsychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders.

Beyond his research accomplishments, Weibo has embraced opportunities to mentor and train new scientists. He has worked closely with postdoctoral fellows and PhD students and served as a mentor to an undergraduate student, Xiangru Li, in the Biology Honors Program at Emory University (2022–2024). Under his guidance, Xiangru earned the Highest Honors in Biology from Emory. These experiences reflect his strong teaching and mentoring abilities, which position him to inspire and support the next generation of scientists effectively.

Rachel Waford, **PhD**, **ABPP** – Rachel Waford is a licensed clinical psychologist who has spent 10 years as an assistant professor in the Hubert Department of Global Health

at the Emory Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH). She joins the faculty with a secondary, half-time appointment in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences where she will be the Lead Psychologist for PSTAR at the Clinical & Research Program for Psychosis (CRPP).

Rachel received her PhD from the University of Louisville in 2013. She completed her doctoral internship in first-episode psychosis at Harvard Medical School in the Prevention and Recovery for Early Psychosis Program (PREP) and Massachusetts Mental Health Center. Rachel then completed her postdoctoral residency training at Emory University School of Medicine/Grady Health System. Rachel joined the RSPH faculty in 2014 and opened a small private practice to serve individuals and families experiencing schizophrenia spectrum disorders in metro Atlanta and surrounding counties. During this time, she maintained her strong connections with her Emory colleagues, and they collaborated frequently over the last 10 years as the Grady Psychosis Program grew. After many years as an independent practitioner, Rachel is ready to close her practice and formally join the CRPP team!

In addition to clinical practice, Rachel's public health research focuses on understanding health systems, barriers to care and facilitators of recovery across the state of Georgia and beyond. She uses global mental health frameworks to develop innovative models for service provision, community engagement and peer-led initiatives. Rachel currently serves as the vice-chair of the board of directors for Community Friendship, INC and a volunteer psychologist for the Atlanta Asylum Network and Georgia Human Rights Clinic. During her free time, Rachel enjoys cooking, running and yoga, all so she can keep with her speedy 4-year-old, Levon!

DISC GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Helen Hunter, PsyD, Adjunct Faculty

I've had the unique experience of living in diverse regions across the United States, which has deeply shaped my perspective on diversity and inclusion. I grew up in the Bay Area of California until I was 11, moved to Birmingham, Alabama, spent time in the Midwest for graduate school, and completed an internship in New England. Additionally, I have a fraternal twin sister and three older siblings, all of whom were born in the Philippines, adding another layer of multiculturalism to my upbringing.

Moving from the diverse Bay Area to Birmingham, Alabama, was a transformative experience. It exposed me to stark regional differences in how Asians are perceived and treated, especially as someone who is half Filipino and half white. This transition taught me resilience and adaptability, helping me appreciate the importance of allowing people to define their identities on their own terms.

When my family moved to Birmingham, Alabama, I often faced the question, "Where are you from?" At first, I would respond, "I'm from Birmingham," only to hear, "No, where are you *really* from?" as if I couldn't possibly be from the U.S. This question often left me caught off guard, and I'd end up explaining that my mom is from the Philippines. While

these interactions were frustrating, they also made me more aware of the assumptions people carry and helped me learn how to address them constructively.

As someone who is biracial, I believe it's crucial to allow individuals the freedom to identify with both—or all—of their cultural heritages. People often expect me to identify solely with my Asian side or are surprised if I express something they perceive as "white." However, I find strength in embracing both cultures, understanding that no two experiences are the same, even among people with similar backgrounds. My Filipino heritage, for instance, has exposed me to a wide range of experiences, proving that even within one cultural group, diversity abounds.

While working at the VA, I've had the privilege of serving veterans from various cultural backgrounds, including those born in other countries who became U.S. citizens through military service or American parentage. It's been fascinating to hear their stories of adapting to both American and military cultures while maintaining ties to their home countries. These interactions have deepened my understanding of how cultural identity evolves in diverse settings.

In my work with veterans, I've found that my cultural background often sparks meaningful conversations. Many veterans, having traveled extensively, are familiar with different cultures and are eager to share their own experiences. Unlike the microaggressions I've experienced elsewhere, these interactions feel affirming. Veterans often recognize my Filipino heritage and ask directly about it, which allows me to share my story and learn from theirs.

One of my favorite family traditions is celebrating the Philippines' Independence Day on June 12. For us, it's like having a second Fourth of July. We honor this day with vibrant celebrations that include Filipino food, music, and dancing, creating a heartfelt connection to our heritage.

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

Allison LoPilato will be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor effective September 1, 2025.

Mike Martin was selected to be Convention Co-Chair for APA Division 18 2025 Convention in Denver, and the Chair for the 2026 Convention in Washington DC.

Research

Beach SR, Ernst CL, Fipps DC, Soeprono TM, Lavakumar M, Greenstein SP, Heinrich TW, Schwartz AC. 2024 ACLP Recommendations for Training Residents in Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry. J Acad Consult Liaison Psychiatry. 2024 Nov 10:S2667-2960(24)00115-0. doi: 10.1016/j.jaclp.2024.11.001. Online ahead of print.

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Haroon E, Miller AH. Rewiring the brain: Inflammation's impact on glutamate and neural networks in depression. Neuropsychopharmacology. 2024 Nov;50(1):312-313.

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Sippel LM, Hamblen JL, Kelmendi B, Alpert JE, Carpenter LL, Grzenda A, Kraguljac N, McDonald WM, Rodriguez CI, Widge AS, Nemeroff CB, Schnurr PP, Holtzheimer PE; APA Council of Research Task Force on Novel Biomarkers and Treatments. Novel Pharmacologic and Other Somatic Treatment Approaches for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Adults: State of the Evidence. Am J Psychiatry. 2024 Dec 1;181(12):1045-1058. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.20230950. PMID: 39616450.

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Honors, Awards, Rankings

Christina Clarke achieved board certification in Couple and Family Psychology from the American Board of Professional Psychology.

Negar Fani (1) received an R01 grant for "Identifying Neural Signatures of Racial Discrimination in Black individuals with a Multivariate Data Fusion Approach" from NIMH. The \$3 million study will fuse ecological momentary assessment of racial discrimination experiences and coping (over the course of one month) with multimodal

MRI. (2) received the Emory at Grady Excellence in Health Equity Research: Trailblazer Award for 2024.

Brandon Kitay was accepted into the Emory Professional Leadership Enrichment Program (EM-ProLead) course.

Laura Loucks achieved specialty board certification in Couple and Family Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology.

Belinda McIntosh was selected to participate in the 2025 Emory at Grady Faculty Development Program for Clinical Teachers.

Samantha Patton achieved ABPP specialty board certification in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology.

DeJuan White received the EMCF SEA Award: Promoting Health Equity for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals in Georgia: The Foundation of Formerly Incarcerated Transitions Clinic."

Jennifer Wootten received the Emory at Grady Best Colleague Award for 2024.

The Addiction Aliiance of Georgia (1) was awarded \$4.4 million from The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities through the Opioid Settlement for operating costs and an additional \$1.3 million to jointly run an immersion program with HBFF (2) received an additional \$1.5 million from the Rollins Foundation to start renovating space for treating children as young as 12-years-old for SUD.

The Emory Veterans Program was awarded \$800,000 to defray operating costs from the Schoen Foundation.

Education

Schwartz AC. "Providing effective feedback to residents and other learners." Faculty Development Seminar, Morehouse School of Medicine, December 2024

Media

Brandon Kitay (1) AJC – <u>Can One of the Best Treatments for Depression Move Past</u> <u>its Old Reputation?</u>

Rachel Waford (1) Rollins Magazine – <u>Mental Health and Living with Anxiety During</u> **Presidential Transitions**

Presentations

Andrew Sherrill presented a lecture titled Avoiding Avoidance in PTSD Treatment: How to Stop Colluding and Promote New Learning with Compassion for the National Center for PTSD.