

EMORY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES KUDOS  
JANUARY 2025

**REMEMBER**

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

**SAVE THE DATES**

**UPCOMING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR**

The next Faculty Development Seminar is:

- Wednesday, April 2, 2025, from 9-10:30am – Consulting as Faculty Members: Securing and Engaging in Opportunities and Navigating Challenges
- Wednesday, May 21, 2025, from 9-10:30am – Promotion Readiness: Writing Your Personal Statement
- Wednesday, July 16, 2025, from 9-10:00am – Understanding Your Responsibilities: External Activities and COI Disclosures with Nicole Tannebaum, JD, MSPH

**WRITING GROUPS: UPCOMING**

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: Zhexing Wen, PhD**

Zhexing Wen an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Cell Biology, Neurology and Human Genetics. He is a member of the Emory Center for Neurodegenerative Disease (CND), a faculty member of the Neuroscience Graduate Program at the Laney Graduate School and the director of the Laboratory for Neurobiology of Psychiatric Disorders.

Outside of Emory, Zhexing serves as ad hoc reviewer for federal and international funding agencies, such as NIH, DOD, Brain Canada Foundation, UK Wellcome Trust, Dutch Research Council, Italy Fondazione Telethon, International OCD Foundation and Israeli Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology. He also serves as ad hoc reviewer for prestigious journals, such as Nature Neuroscience, Nature Cell Biology, Cell Stem Cell, Molecular Psychiatry and Nature Communications.

Zhexing most enjoys the process of uncovering molecular mechanisms that drive neuropsychiatric disorders because it allows him to contribute to both fundamental neuroscience and potential therapeutic advances. The thrill of discovering something new, combined with the opportunity to mentor young scientists and shape the future of the field, makes his work deeply fulfilling.

Zhexing's career began with a deep curiosity about the molecular basis of neuropsychiatric disorders, leading him to a PhD and postdoc training in Neuroscience and subsequent faculty position. Key highlights include pioneering work on patient-derived induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC) models to study human biology of disease and translate such knowledge into therapeutic targets for developing novel treatments. Using the iPSC technology, he discovered that a unique mutation of DISC1, one the best supported susceptibility genes for major mental illness, causes synapse deficits via large-scale transcriptional dysregulation in human neurons. They further identified small molecules that could rescue the synaptic deficits in patient iPSC-derived neurons the DISC1 mutation. In addition, they were one of the first groups to provide the causal link of Zika virus infection to the microcephaly. They further performed a drug repurposing screen with human iPSC-derived NPCs and astrocytes and identified compounds that either inhibit ZIKV infection or suppress the cell death in these neural cell types. More recently, his group generated 3-D brain organoids from patients with Alzheimer's disease (AD), tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC) and fragile X syndrome (FXS) to study the molecular mechanisms underlying these diseases. He has published more than 70 peer-reviewed articles. His research is supported by 7 NIH R01s, 4 NIH R21s, one DoD and one Edward Mallinckrodt, Jr. Foundation Grant as PI/MPI. Zhexing also serves as Project PI for one NIH P50 Center Grant and PI of the Scientific Core for one NIH U19 Center grant. His laboratory has also received support through multiple internal Emory mechanisms (I3 Awards, WHSC Synergy Awards, University Research Council and ADRC). His lab provides research opportunities for undergraduate students, PhD/medical students, as well as postdoctoral/medical fellows. He serves as mentor/co-mentor for three NIH NRSA F31 Fellows and one NIH K01 Fellow, as well as one PhRMA Foundation Fellow, one TSC Alliance Fellow and one FRAXA Research Foundation Fellow. These experiences have shaped his commitment to both scientific discovery and providing training and mentorship to the next generation of scientists, which continue to drive his work today.

Looking to the future, Zhexing's long-term research goal is to understand the etiology and pathogenesis of brain disorders and develop novel therapeutic strategies. He aspires to grow and foster his collaborations at Emory and elsewhere to stimulate new ideas and continue to provide excellent academic and professional service to his colleagues through his laboratory work. He also looks forward to contributing to training the next generation of translational researchers.

Outside of work, Zhexing enjoys traveling and music, both of which provide fresh perspectives and creative inspiration.

#### **ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Erica Bacher, PhD**

Erica Bacher is a licensed psychologist and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University, as well as founder of Evolve Counseling and Wellness Center. At Evolve, she has created a practice dedicated to providing evidence-based, holistic care that helps clients achieve meaningful and lasting change.

A humanistic clinical psychologist at her core, Erica values authenticity, trust and a strong therapeutic alliance, believing in the inherent goodness of people and their capacity for growth. She specializes in an integrative approach to therapy, blending evidence-based models such as emotion-focused therapy, interpersonal approaches, motivational interviewing, mindfulness-based therapies and cognitive-behavioral therapy. She works with individuals and couples and leads an interpersonal support group focused on relational dynamics and emotional connection.

Erica attended the University of Michigan, magna cum laude (Go Blue!) She then went on to earn her PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Arizona and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University, where she developed expertise in psychotherapy integration, culturally informed interventions and suicidality. Erica has a subspecialty in health psychology and worked with patients with a myriad of chronic health conditions in a variety of medical settings. She has spent time teaching family medicine residents and physicians motivational interviewing in addition to supervising psychology interns, post-docs and psychiatry residents. Erica is involved in speaking and organizing events in the community and strives to reduce mental health stigma.

As an adjunct faculty member, Erica has supervised psychiatry residents and psychology interns in the provision of individual and group psychotherapy and provided professional mentorship for psychology interns and postdoctoral fellows. She loves watching trainees grow in confidence and develop their unique therapeutic identities. Witnessing their professional and personal transformation is one of the most fulfilling aspects of her work.

People would be surprised to know Erica is an Atlanta native who attended Paideia School and Woodward Academy. Prior to graduate school, she spent two years as an advisor and teacher for high school students at Ben Franklin Academy in Atlanta.

You can learn more about Erica and her practice at:

- [Evolve Counseling and Wellness](#)
- [Erica Bacher, PhD](#)

### **STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Stuart Pearson**

Stuart Pearson is a licensed professional counselor (LPC) and has been a therapist for nine years. He started at Emory in the Emory Addiction Center in July 2024 and has been working in two capacities: 1) a group therapy facilitator for the Intensive Outpatient (IOP) and Partial Hospitalization Programs (PHP) for substance use disorders in the clinic, and 2) providing individual therapy services on an outpatient basis.

Therapy is Stuart's second career. He served in the US Army on active duty for three years with service in Afghanistan in 2010. After departing from active duty, he continued to serve another six years in the Georgia Army National Guard while he completed graduate school and met requirements for licensure as a professional counselor. Prior to working at Emory, he worked as a therapist with a private practice in Carrollton,

Georgia. While he was working in private practice, he also worked as a group facilitator in the Accountability Court Program for Drug and Alcohol offenses in Carroll County. He provided relapse prevention and recovery skill focus groups.

Since graduate school and after, Stuart has also been a researcher on Cluster Headache Disorder focusing on patient suicidality, severity of pain, personal burden, medication safety and efficacy and quality of life. He built and administered an internet survey that collected over 3,000 patient responses from over 60 countries around the world. He is grateful to have his name on five separate journal articles in Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain – and shares the author line with a group of physicians and researchers whom he would never have imagined getting the honor of working with in his life. Their primary publication was cited as the key evidence needed at CMS for covering High Flow Oxygen therapy as first line abortive treatment for Cluster Headache attacks – a decision for which CMS had previously been hesitant. He also recently had the surreal experience of getting invited to be a reviewer in that publication last month. In getting to know Cluster Headache patients, he continues to be astonished and amazed by their resilience in the face of their suffering.

At this point, Stuart is getting close to 10,000 hours of seated therapy experience with other human beings. While that certainly pales in comparison to some of his teachers and mentors along the way, it's certainly surreal to look back at his career and imagine how far he has come and some of the experiences he has had along his journey. Stuart's humbling experience has taught him, over and over, that relationships forged in psychotherapy can be extraordinarily unique and challenging, and simultaneously, each one is equally full of astonishing potential. He has been trusted to accompany human beings through some of the darkest and most painful moments of their lives, those who have made the seemingly impossible decision to let go of their substances, and those who have needed help to find a path. He is immensely and unendingly grateful for each person who has enlisted him as an ally in making their own path and inhabiting a life of ownership and belonging.

Stuart does not have any definitive goals or plans for his future at this point. He recently had the wonderful opportunity to learn about Prolonged Exposure therapy at Emory and he looks forward to getting more experience as an Exposure therapist. He remains curious and interested in research and advocacy as well as continuing to improve his practice as a therapist. His only complaint about being in private practice was the simple fact that private practice can be a lonely place to work. Now, he is immensely grateful to be a part of a great team in the Emory Addiction Center. He is glad to work with patients at Emory and interested to see wherever the winds take him next.

Stuart's primary interests outside of work are his family and music. He and his wife recently celebrated their 10-year anniversary, and have a daughter (Charlie - 7), a son (Reed - 5) and two dogs. Stuart's family is his life, and music saves his life every day. If he is not working or with family, you will find him with a guitar in his hands (probably butchering a classic) and loving every second.

### **TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT: Charmaine Mora-Ozuna, PhD**

Charmaine Mora-Ozuna is a postdoctoral resident at Emory primarily based on the Psychiatry CL Service at Grady. She spends a few hours a week on the Nia Project as well. Within the Nia Project, she co-facilitates the Survivors' Group and Domestic Violence Support Group and supervises a doctoral-level trainee.

As a first-generation Mexican woman, Charmaine's family and community were integral to her earning a PhD in counseling psychology from the University of Georgia. Her dedication to advancing Latinx psychology has led her to provide bilingual and bicultural services to Latinxs across various geographical and organizational settings. As an advocate and leader in state and national organizations, Charmaine strives to decolonize psychology by making it accessible beyond the bounds of academia and helping to prepare and protect the next generation of bilingual and bicultural clinicians. She chairs the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee of the Georgia Psychological Association and is part of the National Latinx Psychological Association's (NLPA) workgroup on Bilingual Training Guidelines for Health Service Psychologists, which focuses on increasing the bilingual workforce. Charmaine also feels humbled to have taught the Fall 2024 Mental Health and Wellbeing course at Freedom University, a human rights organization for undocumented students who have been banned from equal access to higher education in Georgia. She deeply enjoyed helping the students develop awareness and skills for implementing healthy strategies as they navigate oppressive systems.

Charmaine's clinical and research interests focus on trauma and resilience, particularly gender-based violence. Her dissertation captured the testimonios (testimonies) of Latina survivors of domestic violence and Latina service providers engaged in culturally competent and interdisciplinary treatment. She received two distinct awards for her dissertation: the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 35 Latinx Student Scholar Award and NLPA's Outstanding Dissertation Award.

Charmaine aspires to continue stepping into spaces where she can use her voice to create lasting impacts in the behavioral health system for underserved communities. She aims to use her skillset as a bilingual and bicultural clinician to increase the accessibility and quality of care for Spanish-speaking communities in Georgia, helping them thrive to their fullest potential.

### **MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: Sheila Rauch, PhD, ABPP** *(written by Laura Watkins, PhD, and Andrew Sherrill, PhD)*

Sheila Rauch is a supportive, collaborative and constructive mentor. We especially appreciate her ability to be both direct and kind and her willingness to share her own experiences and lessons learned. Every day, we observe her genuine cheerleading for not just her mentees but every person in her network – students, patients, colleagues and members of her communities. We have learned from her not to approach our career with a competitive spirit but rather a collaborative spirit. She always validates accomplishments and encourages professional growth. We have borrowed her confidence when submitting grants and internalized her advice to use a scientific

mindset for all professional decisions – to first gather evidence and then follow the data. Sheila also strives at being open to our concerns or questions and is always willing to talk through any issue. She is prompt, responsive and clear when we seek career guidance and set career goals. We are perhaps most grateful for her vigilance for opportunities for her mentees by routinely bringing us in on projects and making introductions with potential collaborators. We know she is conscious of her position as a role model for many of our duties as clinical psychologists: researchers, clinicians, teachers, leaders and, most importantly, human beings beholden to their families. Her impact on the PTSD field is unmistakably impressive and her generative spirit as a mentor will continue to multiply that impact for many years to come.

**PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Bipolar Program at Grady** *(written by Dorian Lamis, PhD, ABPP)*

The Bipolar Clinic and Research Program (BCRP), established by Dorian Lamis in 2015 at the Grady Behavioral Health Outpatient Clinic, represents an empirically grounded approach in comprehensive bipolar disorder treatment and research. Our mission is to provide exceptional, evidence-based care through a multidisciplinary approach that brings together professionals across various specialties, including psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, peer support specialists and trainees, all of whom work collaboratively to provide the highest standard of care for individuals navigating the complexities of bipolar disorder.

Our comprehensive care pathway begins when patients are referred to the BCRP through Epic. Following referral, patients undergo a thorough intake assessment to confirm their bipolar disorder diagnosis and complete a comprehensive battery of validated assessments. The pre-treatment assessment takes approximately 45-60 minutes and patients are compensated \$10 for their participation.

The BCRP's research focuses on understanding the relation between childhood maltreatment (i.e., sexual, physical, emotional abuse/neglect) and suicidal ideation/behavior in individuals with bipolar disorder. We also explore various factors (mediators, moderators) that may influence this association, including substance use, depressive symptoms, spirituality and quality of life. Through support from the Brain and Behavior Foundation, we previously incorporated genetic and epigenetic analyses using saliva samples to better understand suicide risk factors in bipolar disorder. We have collected data on approximately 250 bipolar patients, predominantly representing underserved populations—largely African American individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Findings from the BCRP have been published in several high-quality journals, including the Journal of Affective Disorders, Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior and Bipolar Disorders.

Our treatment program features a comprehensive eight-week closed group therapy curriculum that combines four evidence-based approaches:

1. Psychoeducation and Medication Management: Empowering patients with knowledge about their condition and optimal medication use

2. Bipolar-Specific Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Teaching practical skills for managing symptoms and preventing relapse
3. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: Developing techniques for emotional regulation and stress management
4. Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy: Stabilizing daily routines and improving interpersonal relationships

Throughout their participation, patients receive coordinated access to essential support services, including case management, medication management and substance abuse treatment when needed. To assess program effectiveness, we conduct post-treatment assessments that evaluate improvements in psychological symptoms, quality of life and reduction in suicidal ideation. This data-driven approach allows us to continuously refine our programs while contributing to the broader understanding of effective bipolar disorder treatment, particularly among patients who are at an increased risk for suicide.

If you believe someone has a bipolar disorder diagnosis and would benefit from our programming, please send an Epic message to Dorian Lamis with relevant patient information.

### **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**

Noriel Lim was elected to serve as secretary/secretary-elect for American Psychological Association's Division 45 (Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race). He also was invited to serve on Professional Advisory Board of the Lotus Project, a center for trauma-informed care and prevention for Asian American and Asian Immigrant children and families.

#### **Research**

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[based motivation, and anhedonia in depressed patients with higher inflammation.](#) Brain, Behavior, and Immunity. 2025;125:240-8. \*These authors contributed equally.

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Katrinli S, Rothbaum AO, DeMoss R, Turner WC, Hunter B, Powers A, Michopoulos V, Smith AK. The impact of ovulation-suppressing contraceptives on behavioral and functional difficulties in borderline personality disorder. Neuropsychopharmacology. 2025 Jan 11. doi: 10.1038/s41386-024-02045-4. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39799250.

Li M, Yang Y, Zhang L, Xia L, Zhang S, Kaslow NJ, Liu T, Liu Y, Jiang F, Tang YL, Liu H. [Mental health, job satisfaction and quality of life among psychiatric nurses in China during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study.](#) Clinical Epidemiology and Global Health. 2024



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Mulligan DJ, Taylor A, & Lamis DA. (2025). [Integrating social determinants with the interpersonal theory of suicide in a mediation study of bipolar outpatients](#). *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*.

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

Rob Cotes was selected as Editor-In-Chief for Community Mental Health Journal.

Negar Fani was named a full member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

Rachel Hershenberg was elected as a Specialty Board Officer for the American Board of Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology.

Belinda McIntosh was elected as a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association by the APA Board of Trustees.

Vas Michopoulos was named a full member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

Ann Schwartz (1) was named Generative Invited Reviewer for Academic Psychiatry, as well as a Senior Editorial Mentor (2) is now Board Certified in Addiction Medicine American Board of Preventive Medicine.

Jennifer Stevens was named a full member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

Sanne van Rooij has been named an associate member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

### **Media**

Rachel Hershenberg (1) Everyday Health – [How to Motivate Yourself to Exercise if Depression Is Getting in the Way](#).

Andrew Miller (1) “The Mind-Gut Conversation” podcast – [The Role of Inflammation in Mental Disorders](#).

Roman Palitzky (1) Atlanta Jewish Times – [Psychedelics May Aid the Spirit and Body](#).

Sheila Rauch (1) AJC – [Mental Health Treatment Center Planned for First Responders in Georgia](#) (2) Warrior Alliance Network – [Tackling PTSD with Dr. Sheila Rauch of Emory Healthcare](#)

### **Presentations**

Karen Drexler gave a video teleconference presentation titled "Historical Perspectives on Medical Provision of Opioids and OUD" for the VA National Opioid Safety and Risk Mitigation Community of Practice Call.

Goodman G. (2025, January). God is our refuge: Transforming attachment to the living God. The New Class, Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, Atlanta, GA.

Goodman G. (2025, January). A process approach to caring. Stephen Ministry Training Workshop, First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA.

Goodman G. (2025, May). Our refuge and strength: Transforming attachment to the living God. Paper to be presented at the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), Minneapolis, MN.

Goodman G, & Dent VF. (2024, October). Once upon a time: Studying Ugandan preschoolers' storytelling/story-acting play activity. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Play Therapy, Atlanta, GA.

LoParo D. (2024, December 8-11). Machine learning prediction of individual patient outcomes to psychotherapy versus medication for major depression. 63rd Annual Meeting of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, Phoenix, Arizona.

### **STAFF KUDOS**

Audrey Kelly-Rhine just celebrated 30 years at Emory University.