Crystal Fuller Lewis, PhD joined NKI on June 1, and heads the renewed Division of Social Solutions and Services Research (formerly Division of Statistics and Services Research). At the same time, she joined the Department of Psychiatry at NYU School of Medicine as a Research Associate Professor. Dr. Lewis earned her PhD in Epidemiology from Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health, and comes to NKI from the Department of Epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University where she sustained a successful NIH-funded research program over the past 15 years, focused on substance use and the social and medical-related disparities experienced by those at risk and/or heavily burdened by substance use in NYC. Her primary content areas have included various forms of stigma, lack of social support, incarceration, unstable housing, mental illness, and both chronic and infectious diseases typically faced by our most vulnerable communities.

Dr. Lewis’s research portfolio includes the design, conduct, and analysis of community-based studies, particularly structural and multilevel interventions that consider many of these life circumstances. For example, her current research involves the use of pharmacies in low-income communities as a structural approach to increasing access to biomedical HIV prevention services and medical care through the use of a technology-supported pharmacist-clinician partnership providing co-managed patient care (iPEPcare). Another structural approach to increase access to services included “packaging” HIV testing services with
chronic disease screening services (cholesterol, blood pressure, and glucose) in a pharmacy setting which resulted in increased uptake in HIV testing specifically among those who expressed internalized stigma (compared to those offered HIV testing alone). Dr. Lewis most recently expanded her research expertise into the use of internet and mobile technologies to help connect persons heavily involved in substance use to substance use prevention, treatment, and relevant social/medical services (WebHealth4Us.com).

Why NKI?

In studying the epidemiology of substance use and designing interventions to increase access to prevention, care and services, it is clear that other forms of mental illness – including depression anxiety, and severe psychiatric conditions – are all-too-often related to the problem of substance use. New York State has reached a critical time in the design of mental health services which can now be delivered with attention to the many social and structural challenges faced by the most vulnerable populations. After 15 years of independent research and publishing results of successful interventions, moving a step closer to policy and policy makers is an opportunity to conduct research within an arena where there is a much higher potential for impact than within a pure academic setting.

New Vision

While there is much discussion about the need for better care and new approaches to the ways in which services are delivered, there are still obvious gaps in this delivery system. It is my goal that NKI, through our new Division of Social Solutions and Services Research, will be recognized as the leader in research and evaluation that directly impacts the delivery of mental health services to underserved citizens across New York State.

My vision for the Division of Social Solutions and Services Research is to expand beyond the clinic walls to solve the persistent problem of disparities in access to both prevention and treatment services, such that wellness and recovery can be realized for all New Yorkers. And, due to new national and state policy reforms, connecting highest need communities to prevention, wellness, and recovery is a high priority for the Office of Mental Health as well as for NKI.

Aligned with this vision, OMH has increased its emphasis on the redesign of our mental health care system by (1) shifting focus from institutional settings to community-based care, and (2) supporting integration of medical and mental health care. Several initiatives to achieve these objectives are currently underway, creating a need for rigorous evaluation of their impact, particularly among the most vulnerable, high risk communities.

Our Approach

Our research efforts will focus on long-standing individual and structural barriers to prevention, wellness, and recovery that have been most difficult to address and typically include unstable housing, criminal justice involvement, and substance use dependence. These factors are, in turn, intertwined with race and ethnicity, income, immigration status, language barriers, aging, and culturally-based factors including various forms of stigma and discrimination that often accompany these challenging life circumstances. Testing innovative approaches (such as use of mental health peer advocates) to improve quality service outcomes and using robust epidemiologic and services research methods are vital for achieving successful translation, implementation, and sustainability. At NKI, this opportunity exists given the energetic research team in the Division. Our team will be engaged in investigating creative solutions operating at both individual and structural levels to optimize effective and efficient delivery of mental health care.
Grants and Funding

Funding Opportunity

Blas Frangione Young Investigator Research Grant

The Blas Frangione Foundation is now accepting applications for a research grant for the academic year 2016-2017 at New York University. This grant promotes the work of outstanding young investigators establishing their independence in the field of neuroscience and provides support during a critical period of career development.

Amount: $50,000 to be used for research purposes.

Criteria: Applications are encouraged from early career basic, translational and clinical scientists currently active in research within the field of neuroscience, brain function, brain aging, Alzheimer’s disease and related neurodegenerative diseases. Applicants can have any level of faculty appointment up through assistant professor. The research presented must be original and innovative and focus on advancing the understanding of the brain and application of new scientific knowledge to develop improved disease treatments and cures. We welcome applications from a diverse array of departments whose research is linked to brain study, specifically but not limited to neurology, psychiatry, anesthesiology, neurosurgery, radiology, geriatrics, child studies, etc.

Application Information: A project proposal following the RO3 NIH format, along with a biosketch, should be submitted by October 1, 2015 to Camy Sleeman at camy.sleeman@nyumc.org. The awardee will be notified on December 1, 2015. For specific information about the application, please contact Dr. Blas Frangione at blas.frangione@nyumc.org. The Foundation committee will be responsible for the review of applications and making the final decision.

Program Information: The goal of the Blas Frangione Foundation, established in 2009 by Blas Frangione, MD, PhD, Professor of Pathology and Psychiatry, is to support research relevant to neuroscience, brain aging and neurodegenerative diseases.

From Around the Institute

Kudos

MERIT Award to Regina Sullivan

Regina Sullivan, PhD (Emotional Brain Institute) has received a MERIT Award from the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD). MERIT stands for Method to Extend Research In Time. Since 1987, these awards have been made to investigators who have demonstrated superior competence and outstanding productivity during their previous research experience. The purpose of the award is to provide such investigators with long-term, stable support to foster their continued creativity. Read more about Dr. Sullivan’s research here.

Zaven Khachaturian Award to Dr. Nixon

Ralph A. Nixon, MD, PhD, Director of the Center for Dementia Research, was recognized by the Alzheimer’s Association at the AAIC 2015 with the Zaven Khachaturian Award for his achievement in advancing the field of Alzheimer’s disease science.

A press release from the Alzheimer’s Association notes that "Dr. Nixon’s pioneering research into the early brain changes associated with Alzheimer’s disease, including the abnormal breakdown of proteins, has helped scientists better understand the process by which Alzheimer’s develops and progresses. His research has helped identify new avenues for investigating potential Alzheimer’s disease therapies."
Janie Rathjen has joined NKI as our new Personnel Director. By way of introduction, she shared the following:

“I’ve held various positions with several agencies during my career as a state employee, starting with Department of Corrections at the Fishkill Correctional Facility; then to the NYS Attorney General’s Office with the NYS Department of Law at Helen Hayes Hospital; Taconic DDSO; and most recently, Hudson Valley DDSO with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

I’ve lived in the Hudson Valley most of my life and currently reside in Cold Spring. I enjoy spending time outdoors and getting together with my children and grandchildren. I am intrigued by NKI’s mission, accomplishments, and the on-going research work that is done here. Thanks for the warm welcome, and I look forward to meeting everyone!”

Return to the Old Country

In May, Abel Lajtha, PhD (Neurochemistry) returned to Budapest to give a speech as the distinguished guest during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Biochemical Institute of the Medical School. The Institute was established in 1945, just after the war, by the most famous Hungarian scientist, Nobel Prize winner Albert Szent-Gyorgyi. Dr. Lajtha is the only living person who joined Szent-Gyorgyi when he reorganized the Institute in 1945. Throughout his career, Dr. Lajtha’s Center for Neurochemistry often collaborated with the Budapest Institute.

Not long after that, Dr. Lajtha visited Budapest again (and gave another speech), this time for the dedication of a statue in the middle of Budapest of his father, Laszlo Lajtha, a celebrated Hungarian composer. The ceremony took place on June 30th, Laszlo’s birthday. The statue is located near the Lajtha family house, in a garden where outdoor concerts are held. As an anti-Communist, Laszlo Lajtha was neglected during that regime.
Joseph LeDoux, PhD, Director of the Emotional Brain Institute (EBI), was interviewed on The Leonard Lopate Show in a segment titled “How the brain processes anxiety”.

This interview coincided with the release of Dr. LeDoux’s latest book, Anxious: Using the Brain to Understand and Treat Fear and Anxiety (Viking). Anxious received a glowing review in Nature.

Steve DeRosa (Dementia Research) wants you to know that “We play soccer on Fridays from 5:00 until 6-6:30 on the field directly in front of the main entrance of NKI. It’s very informal, we play just for fun. If anyone would like to join us, please let me know and I will include you in our email list.”

PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

The latest results from Ralph Nixon’s lab (Center for Dementia Research) appear online in Molecular Psychiatry. The article is open access. A press release explains the significance of this research.


Also recently published online in this journal is a connectome-wide association study coauthored by Cameron Craddock and Michael Milham (Center for Biomedical Imaging and Neuromodulation). This paper was noted on the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation’s Discoveries blog.

This review by Xavier Castellanos (Child & Adolescent Psychiatry) and Argelinda Baroni appears in a theme issue on cognitive enhancement.


Crystal Lewis, the new head of Social Solutions and Services Research, is the first author of this study of a pharmacy intervention to decrease HIV risk among injection drug users.


Joshua Kantrowitz (Schizophrenia Research) is the first author of this letter reporting on a small study attempting to improve response maintenance after ketamine treatment.


Deputy Director Antonio Convit, along with NKI and NYU colleagues, report on the outcomes of the BODY Project in the Journal of Community Health.


The latest publication from the lab of Mariko Saito (Neurochemistry), with Mitsuo Saito, Maria Hui, Kurt Masiello, and others, appears online in the Journal of Lipid Research.


Hardly a month goes by without an NKI paper in The Journal of Neuroscience. The most recent is this one by John Foxe and colleagues.

The latest paper by **Latha Devi** and **Masuo Ohno** (Dementia Research) appears online in the open access journal *Translational Psychiatry*.


**Daniel Javitt**, along with **Pamela Butler** and others, report on emotion recognition deficits in patients at high risk for schizophrenia. This paper was selected for inclusion and comment in *Journal Watch Psychiatry*.


**Pál Czobor**, along with former NKI investigators Les Citrome and Jan Volavka, published this meta-analysis in *European Neuropsychopharmacology*.


In the new open access journal *Neuroscience Communications*, **Morris Baslow** proposes an answer to a question posed by Joseph Coyle in a **1997 paper**.


The NKI librarian is always available to assist with literature searching, citation searching (Web of Science, Scopus), bibliographic reference management, and the like. When you have any information needs, or questions about available resources, don’t hesitate to turn to us.

The library still offers a comfortable, quiet space for reading, work, and small meetings. And we now have Wi-Fi. Just ask the library staff for the password.

You can **link to the NKI Library’s website** from myNKI. The Library site includes quick links to the NYU Health Sciences Library and to the New York State Library, as well as links to NKI’s own library resources (**journal finder**, **online catalog**, **PsychiatryOnline**, etc.). Remote access is available using NKI’s VPN.
On June 16th, the 25 millionth journal citation was added to PubMed.

A new initiative called PubMed Labs aims to involve the user community in creating innovative products, through experimentation, learning, and conversation. The first of these is a new feature (utilizing anonymous click data) designed to help you find related articles quickly. Now, some PubMed abstracts have a link called “Articles frequently viewed together”. Look for this link in the right column under “Related Information”. SmartBLAST, an enhancement to protein BLAST, is another new, experimental feature.

Nature now offers a free daily news alert. “Sign up now to receive your essential wrap-up of the major stories across the world of science”.

The 2014 edition of Health, United States – presenting an annual overview of national trends in health statistics – was released in May. The 2014 edition includes a Special Feature on Adults Aged 55–64.

An article in the June issue of the Harvard Business Review suggests ways of “Conquering Digital Distraction”. Here you will find different strategies offered by a psychologist and a technologist.

The New York Times Magazine recently published a special mental health theme issue. It features articles including “Can the Bacteria in Your Gut Explain Your Mood?”, “I Don’t Believe in God, but I believe in Lithium”, “Why I’m Afraid of Therapy”, and “Confessions of a Seduction Addict”.

The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry offers a monthly Publisher’s Podcast – an audio summary of topics in the latest issue. You can listen and subscribe here.
The Rockefeller Foundation–Lancet Commission on planetary health has published its final report, entitled “Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch”, which concludes that:

“we have been mortgaging the health of future generations to realise economic and development gains in the present. By unsustainably exploiting nature’s resources, human civilisation has flourished but now risks substantial health effects from the degradation of nature’s life support systems in the future.”

Accompanying the report is this succinct infographic.

The New York Times

The New York Times recently reported on a rare condition, now named aphantasia, in which people are unable to conjure mental images. In other words, they lack a “mind’s eye”. Preliminary research on the subject, by Adam Zeman and colleagues, appears in the journal Cortex.

Nunzio Pomara, MD (Geriatric Psychiatry), with NKI coauthors including Babak Ardekani, Alvin Bachman, Jay Nierenberg, Eva Petkova, Chelsea Reichert, and John Sidtis, contributed to four posters at the 2015 Alzheimer’s Association International Conference held in Washington, DC, from July 18-23. The poster titles were:

- Predictors of Cognitive Decline in Elderly Depressives
- A Comparison of Hippocampal Volume and Integrity: Which Is the Better Predictor of Cognitive Decline?
- The Association of Output Order and Variability in Free Recall with Cognitive Ability and Hippocampal Volume in Elderly Individuals
- Is Hippocampal Size Associated with Primacy Recall Performance in Amnestic Mild Cognitive Impairment?

Dr. Pomara was the presenting author for the first two.

For news about the award received by Dr. Ralph Nixon at the AAIC this year, see the KUDOS section on page 3.

Google Earth celebrated its 10th birthday at the end of June. See the Google Blog for an overview of its past as well as its latest features, and check out Earth View for some amazing images.

The 2015 annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology took place in Miami in June, with contributions by Jean-Pierre Lindenmayer, MD and Anzalee Khan, PhD (Manhattan Psychiatric Center) and Vilma Gabbay, MD (Child & Adolescent Psychiatry).
Dr. Lindenmayer chaired a session on “Long Acting Injectable in the Treatment of Schizophrenia: Missed Opportunities and Challenges”.

Dr. Khan gave two session presentations, on “Individualizing and Integrating Measurement Tools for Social Cognition” and “Measuring Statistically and Clinically Meaningful Change in Clinical Trials: Moving away from Percent Change and Arbitrary Changes in Scores”. She also presented posters titled “Scientific Brain Training Programs on Cognition, Social Cognition and Functioning: Comparison of Cognitive Remediation Programs in Severe Mental Illness” and “Psychometric Properties of the Dynamic Social Cognition Battery (DSCB) in Patients with Severe Mental Illness”.

Dr. Gabbay contributed to two posters, on “Brain Metabolite Abnormalities in Depressed Adolescents” and “The Role of the Kynurenine Pathway in Suicidality in Adolescent Major Depressive Disorder”. This research was covered by Medscape (“New Biomarker May Predict Suicide”).

Abstracts for the oral sessions and the posters are online.

Vinod Yaragudri, PhD (Analytical Psychopharmacology) presented a poster entitled “CB1 receptor modulates neuropeptide Y expression through epigenetic changes and reduces alcohol consumption” (Vinod KY, Sakharkar AJ, Zhang H, Vemuri K, Makriyannis A, Hungund BL, Pandey SC) at the Research Society on Alcoholism Scientific Meeting in San Antonio, TX.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SEMINARS

Statewide Satellite Grand Rounds

*Synthetic Cannabinoids: An Emerging Epidemic*

Presenter – Charles Morgan, MD
Acting Medical Director, NYS OASAS

Panelist – Mark Sorensen, MD
Clinical Director, Creedmoor Psychiatric Center

Wednesday, September 16th at 1:00 pm

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) hosts a monthly interactive video broadcast covering the latest research, technology and treatment implementation in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. These programs are recorded, and the archived Statewide Grand Rounds programs can be viewed by OMH employees on the OMH intranet. Anyone can view the programs on the OMH website.

NKi PUBLICATIONS UPDATE

Below is a list of references that have been added to the NKI publications database since the previous update. The full database contains over 5,000 items dating back to 1995, and can be searched from the NKI web site.


Haghighi F, Galfalvy H, Chen S, Huang YY, Cooper TB, Burke AK, Oquendo MA, Mann JJ, Sublette ME. DNA methylation perturbations in genes involved in polyunsaturated Fatty Acid biosynthesis associated with depression and suicide risk. Front Neurol. 2015 Apr 28;6:92.


Lucic L, Daiute C, Khan A. Narrative exploration of social cognition in adults hospitalized due to symptoms of schizophrenia. European Psychiatry 2015;30[Suppl. 1]:1282. [Abstract]

Lucic L, Khan A, Liharska L, Rothman B. What can we learn about psycho-social functioning of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia from standardized patients? European Psychiatry 2015; 30(Suppl. 1):1268. [Abstract]


