The Early Years at Rockland State Hospital: Examples of Innovation

Contributed by Dr. Kathleen Keefe-Cooperman

On November 19th, Kathleen Keefe-Cooperman, Psy.D. gave a presentation at NKI on the early history of Rockland State Hospital (now Rockland Psychiatric Center). Below is just a brief hint of Dr. Keefe-Cooperman’s broader research, focusing on innovative treatments that were promoted at Rockland State. Not long after these events from the hospital’s first decade, Dr. Nathan Kline came to Rockland (in 1952) and established the research group that later grew into what is now NKI.

Following the introduction of psychotropic medications in the mid-twentieth century (enabling individuals with mental illness to live within the community), deinstitutionalization became the norm. This led to the closing of psychiatric hospitals across the country. Many of these buildings stand vacant as they slowly crumble into obscurity. Each hospital represents a story about mental illness, and the types of care provided offer snapshots of our history.

Care for the mentally ill prior to World War II focused on treating external symptoms and behavioral issues of the most seriously affected individuals. Rockland State Hospital (RSH) opened in 1931 and provides a portrait of care during the Great Depression. There were almost 1,500 employees and over 6,800 patients by the tenth anniversary. Along with traditional treatments of the time, the staff at RSH embraced innovative modes of therapy. In particular, RSH staff promoted the self-help concept by supporting Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and subsequent patient-led groups.
The founding superintendent of RSH, Russell E. Blaisdell, helped to bring AA to the hospital setting. Blaisdell became interested in the treatment of alcoholism during his time as superintendent, and felt that the state hospital system was inadequate for alcoholic patients. A study had been conducted at the site, and found frequent recidivism upon hospital release leading to subsequent readmission. The superintendent took note of the fledgling AA organization, commenting:

An organization composed of ex-alcoholics has been of some assistance in the rehabilitation and after care of alcoholic patients. It is too soon to report on the effectiveness of their work but already sufficient results have been observed to lead us to believe there is merit in this movement.

In 1939, RSH became the first hospital to hold an AA meeting. Blaisdell also attended a pivotal dinner hosted by John D. Rockefeller in New York City that helped the new and floundering AA group receive the national publicity needed to launch its future success. Research was later conducted at RSH on the efficacy of the program, and found a decrease in recidivism. The RSH tenth annual report refers to a visit by Mr. William Wilson of New York City (the Bill W. of AA), and cites him as being the author of the newly published *Alcoholics Anonymous*. In short, RSH was at the forefront of research and treatment in the area of substance abuse.

RSH was also innovative in the psychiatric care of children. Dr. Frank Tallman led this endeavor, and in 1938 he reported on the first on-site children’s unit, at RSH. Dr. Tallman went on to be in charge of Mental Hygiene for the state of California. The child guidance movement had promoted an eclectic treatment approach that addressed the whole child and difficulties involved in daily living. The presenting issues might be in school or due to familial problems. RSH used an organizational approach to incorporate the skills of multiple disciplines, and provided a safe microcosm of the larger world. The benefits of using a therapeutic milieu with children and adolescents arose from the need to find cost effective but successful methods. The children’s program at RSH exemplifies the increasing focus on child psychology, and RSH’s embrace of positive and proactive treatments.

Historical research on RSH is ongoing. The Rockland Historical Society and members of the RPC staff, including Dr. Karen Greene, would like to find records within the surrounding communities of those who lived on site either as staff or as patients. The personal perspective is needed. Much like a person, each hospital shares a commonality with others but also has a unique story to tell. The state hospital helps to provide reminders of the history of mental health. This is important because the buildings, treatments, and people continue to fade into history.

Further Reading


Challace Pahlevan-Ibrekic, MS, CIP, recently joined NKI as the Compliance Director with oversight of both human and animal research compliance and administration for NKI and its research affiliates. She holds a Master of Science in Bioethics and a Bachelor of Science in Earth Science, both from Columbia University. Her professional experience includes regulatory oversight of two medical center IRBs, and development of policies and procedures for the AAHRPP-accredited Human Research Protection Program at Columbia University, with specific expertise in Central IRB review, research involving investigational drugs and devices, whole exome/genome sequencing, vulnerable populations, and research funded by the Department of Defense. Challace serves on her local community board, is married, and has an energetic 2-year-old daughter. She is also a half-marathon runner and an NYC ING Marathon finisher.

Kim Hopper, PhD (Services Research) who recently retired from NY State service at NKI, was named the 2015 recipient of the George Foster Practicing Medical Anthropology Award, granted by the Society for Medical Anthropology of the American Anthropological Association. Presented every two years since 2005, the Foster Award is among the highest achievements in the field and “recognizes those who have made significant contributions to applying theory and methods in medical anthropology, particularly in diverse contexts, to multidisciplinary audiences,” and with impact on policy. The award is granted to those who are widely recognized as game-changers and visionaries. Read more about Dr. Hopper here.

Nunzio Pomara, MD (Geriatric Psychiatry) has been promoted to Fellow status in the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP). Promotion is based on both scientific reputation and contributions to the College through committee work and involvement in the Annual Meeting program.
**KUDOS continued**

Pamela Butler, PhD (Clinical Research) will join the editorial board of *Schizophrenia Bulletin* as of January, 2016. This journal is one of the most highly regarded psychiatric journals, and has a 2014 impact factor of 8.45.

**New York State**

Mary Jane Alexander, PhD (Services Research) received the NAMI-NYS Award for Excellence in Research in recognition of her “leadership of the Center to Study Recovery in Social Contexts ... and her tireless dedication to developing mechanisms to eliminate barriers to services for people living with severe mental illness and identifying new recovery models.” The award was presented at the NAMI-NYS 2015 Education Conference on Redefining Recovery on November 13, where Dr. Alexander gave a talk on *Recovery in Social Contexts*.

**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH**

At Rockland Community College on October 26, several NKI investigators participated in a roundtable discussion on neuroscience research with NY State officials. State Senator David Carlucci, US Congress members Steve Israel and Nita Lowey, and NYS Assemblyman Charles Lavine were joined by NKI scientists Stephen Ginsberg, Efrat Levy, Paul Mathews, Ralph Nixon, and Nunzio Pomara, as well as others. A focus of the discussion was a proposed referendum to raise one billion dollars for Alzheimer’s research in NYS. The event was covered by the *Rockland County Times*.

The Center for Biomedical Imaging and Neuromodulation (C-BIN) hosted the third symposium of the New York Metro Imaging Research Consortium (NYMIRC) on November 18th. The event was well attended, with 95+ signing up and the vast majority attending. A broad range of local institutions was represented at the event, including the Nathan S. Kline Institute, Hunter College (CUNY), City College, Child Mind Institute, Columbia University, NorthShore-LIJ School of Medicine, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New Jersey Institute of Technology, New York Langone Medical Center, and Rutgers. The feedback about the talks was extremely positive and the event provided a unique opportunity to develop future collaborations. Many thanks to the NKI administration for providing financial support to host this event.
On December 9th, State Senator David Carlucci visited NKI to meet with administrators and Center for Dementia Research scientists, and to view two state-of-the-art microscopes (Zeiss LSM 880 Confocal Laser Scanning Microscope and Leica LMD7000 – Laser Capture Microdissection System). These new microscopes were acquired through Senator Carlucci’s advocacy and support. They enable unprecedented exploration of the brain at the level of single neurons as they develop Alzheimer’s disease, and will help ensure NKI’s continued scientific leadership toward the goal of a world without Alzheimer’s disease. Senator Carlucci tweeted about the visit on December 11th.

Members of the Geriatric Psychiatry group participated in the Alzheimer’s Association’s Walk to End Alzheimer’s at Provident Bank Ball Park on October 11. Also in attendance were NYS Senator Carlucci and US Representative Nita Lowey.
A big “WELCOME HOME” to the CREF Unit

On July 28, all patients were evacuated from the CREF Unit and moved to Building 60 in the RPC Midrise Facility. The evacuation took place due to the possibility of an air conditioning failure due to a leak to the campus chilled water line serving NKI. While the water line was being repaired and the unit was vacated, repairs were made to several of the bathrooms, new shelves were installed in the dormitory closets, and other minor repairs and upgrades were made to the unit. The prolonged dislocation of the specialized CREF staff and our many research volunteers presented big challenges to our ongoing research projects. Finally, a full three months later, the staff and patients were able to return to the CREF Unit on November 3. The following day they had a pizza party to celebrate their return. Both patients and staff are happy and relieved to be back “home”, and research staff is happy to be functioning in a more efficient and normal way again.

And just in time to celebrate the holidays!

As many of you have undoubtedly noticed, holiday gift tags have been posted in the NKI lobby. NKI has a long-standing tradition of providing holiday gifts for the CREF patients. If you haven’t done so already, you can help in the gift-giving by picking up a gift tag from the bulletin board in the lobby and purchasing the items labeled on the tag. All unwrapped gifts should be returned to the NKI library by Friday, December 18th with the gift tag attached. Cash donations may be given directly to Connie Shope (room S208), or Stuart Moss in the Library.

Local Leader

Mike Serra, a longtime staffer in the NKI Animal Facility, is the newly-elected Mayor of Pompton Lakes, NJ. Mike previously served on the Borough Council for six years, the last two as President.

Office of Mental Health

The November issue of OMH News focuses on the psychiatric research endeavors of the Office of Mental Health, including NKI, NYS Psychiatric Institute, and the OMH itself.

OMH Medical Director Lloyd Sederer, MD, recently published an article in Psychiatric Services on “The Social Determinants of Mental Health”. These issues are a primary focus of the reorganized department of Social Solutions and Services Research at NKI.
PILOT STUDY FUNDING FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

The NYU Alzheimer’s Disease Center (ADC) is soliciting pilot study proposals from promising junior investigators or from established investigators not currently doing AD research. Two awards of up to $35,000 for one year will be made, based upon local peer review by an ADC committee. The goal is to bring new investigators into the field and to foster innovative and exciting research. It is anticipated that initial pilot support for new lines of research will lead to future independent funding.

Application Procedure: Submission of a preliminary one page summary for rapid pre-review is recommended. Full proposals must follow the NIH RO3 format (SF424/PHS 398) with the narrative text not to exceed 7 pages in length. A single PDF file should be submitted that includes a face page, a 1-year budget not exceeding $35,000 in direct costs (no indirect costs), a biographical sketch, other support and the study narrative (use current NIH forms). The proposal must present a testable hypothesis and specific aims; clearly delineate the rationale and significance; detail the procedures to be followed; and discuss how the results will be analyzed and interpreted. Completion of the study in one year should be feasible.

The submission deadline for full proposals is January 4, 2016.

NYU ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE CENTER
Center for Cognitive Neurology
NYU Langone Medical Center
145 East 32nd Street, Fifth Floor
New York, NY 10016

Contact: Dr. Thomas Wisniewski
E-mail: thomas.wisniewski@nyumc.org
Telephone: (212) 263-7993  FAX: (212) 263-7528

PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

Dr. Raj Balapal (Analytical Psychopharmacology) published this review in the open access journal Brain Sciences.


JAMA Psychiatry
Formerly Archives of General Psychiatry

Two Viewpoint pieces in the December issue of JAMA Psychiatry have NKI co-authors.


Dr. Fabien Trémeau (CREF) and colleagues at NKI and elsewhere published this article on emotion perception in schizophrenia.

NKI research appears in two recent issues of *The Journal of Neuroscience*.


Dr. Bonnie Kerker is a coauthor on several recent papers appearing in *Academic Pediatrics*.


Dr. Elizabeth Phelps (Emotional Brain Institute) coauthored this Perspective in *Neuron*.


Dr. Phelps also contributed a review to *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* with an NYU colleague.


Drs. Emmanuelle Courtiol and Donald Wilson (Emotional Brain Institute) published this mini review article in *Frontiers in Neural Circuits*.

Courtiel E, Wilson DA. The olfactory thalamus: unanswered questions about the role of the mediodorsal thalamic nucleus in olfaction. Front Neural Circuits. 2015 Sep 18;9:49.

Dr. Regina Sullivan (Emotional Brain Institute) and colleagues authored this review in *Genes, Brain and Behavior*.

Jim Robinson (Information Sciences) is a coauthor of a major study of the Recovery After an Initial Schizophrenia Episode (RAISE) initiative.


This paper received extensive media coverage, including this article in The New York Times.

Also, Dr. Xavier Castellanos (Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) contributed an editorial to the October issue of The American Journal of Psychiatry.


Dr. Carole Siegel (Services Research) and NKI colleagues have a new article as well as a Best Practices column in Psychiatric Services.


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.

INFO UPDATE

Here are a couple of recent educational videos posted by the National Library of Medicine.

“Finding Genes in PubMed” is part of the NCBI Minute series of brief videos. This installment shows you how to quickly find literature about a gene of interest using PubMed and Gene database records.

“PubMed for Scientists” is a lengthier webinar designed to help you to: more efficiently search by author; explore a subject; use filters to narrow your search; find the full text article; and set up an e-mail alert for new research on your topic.

You can view many more webinars and courses here and on the NCBI YouTube channel.
Altmetric unveiled its **Top 100 list** of the most shared and discussed academic research of 2015.

Articles in the list can be filtered by institution, journal, access type, and subject category. There is also a very nice interactive institutional affiliation map. 42% of the articles that made the 2015 list were published under a **gold Open Access** license.

The ranking is determined based on which research papers published in the last year have received the most attention from the sources tracked by Altmetric – including mainstream media sites, Wikipedia, blogs, social networks, post-publication peer-review forums, and online reference managers, amongst others.

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**That Was Then. This Is Now.**

Will Ellis is the photographer behind **AbandonedNYC**, a website exploring “abandoned places and history from the five boroughs and beyond”. Coinciding with the cover story in this issue, AbandonedNYC recently featured a post titled **“Time Traveling in the Children’s Ward: Rockland Psychiatric Center”**, showing scenes that are very close by, but hidden from view. A previous post shows additional photos from the Rockland campus.

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**Dr. Mary Jane Alexander** (Services Research) organized a panel at the American Public Health Association annual meeting in Chicago. The topic was **“Crisis as Opportunity: Creating System Change from Within While Implementing a Soft Landing for People in Crisis”**, and presenters included several members of the NKI Parachute Field Team as well as NYC DOHMH and Visiting Nurse Service of New York collaborators on Parachute NYC. Four papers were presented:

1. Crisis as Opportunity: The Parachute NYC approach and participant outcomes (Mary Jane Alexander, Deborah Layman, Dei In Tang, Leah Pope, Kim Hopper, Judy Sugarman, Jennifer Van Tiem)

2. Implementation Evaluation: A Recovery Oriented Roadmap for Crisis (Deborah Layman, Kim Hopper, Leah Pope, Judy Sugarman, Jennifer Van Tiem, Mary Jane Alexander)

3. Integrating Peers into Clinical Teams (Judy Sugarman, Jennifer Van Tiem, Deborah Layman, Leah Pope, Kim Hopper, Mary Jane Alexander)

4. Systems Implications of Parachute NYC - Back to the future: Moving to Home and Community Based Services (Pablo Sadler, MD)

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**Dr. Pamela Butler** (Clinical Research) presented a poster entitled **“Visual Processing and Cognitive Impairment in Schizophrenia”** at the Society for Research in Psychopathology (SRP) meeting in October. Co-authors were Eva Petkova, Vance Zemon, Liangyu Zhu, Nadine Revheim, Karen Nolan, Nayla Scaramello, Joanna DiCostanza, James Gordon, and Daniel Javitt.
Dr. Butler also gave a seminar on “Scientific Writing: Strategies and Steps” at the 2015 Society for Neuroscience meeting in Chicago in October. The seminar was for the Women in World Neuroscience (WWN) organization and was sponsored by the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO).

For details about other NKI contributors to the 2015 SfN meeting, see the abstract viewer.

**UPCOMING EVENTS AND SEMINARS**

**Center for Dementia Research Seminar Series**

*Held on Thursdays at 10 am*

**Helen Scharfman, PhD**
Nathan Kline Institute

*Title TBD*
Thursday, January 7th, 2016

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.


Bedwell JS, Butler PD, Chan CC, Trachik BJ. Transdiagnostic psychiatric symptoms related to visual evoked potential abnormalities. Psychiatry Res. 2015 Sep 8.


Courtiol E, Wilson DA. The olfactory thalamus: unanswered questions about the role of the mediodorsal thalamic nucleus in olfaction. Front Neural Circuits. 2015 Sep 18;9:49.


