

PSYCHIATRIC SUMMARY:

This issue marks the twelfth installment consolidating recent clinical updates, mental health policy news, popular press news patient's may be reading, and changes in the landscape of psychiatry in Wisconsin.

OF GENERAL INTEREST:

One in Five with Medical Debt:

According to the 12/12/2014 AMA Morning Report:

The [New York Times](#) (12/12, Carrns, Subscription Publication) reports that one in five “American consumers — 43 million people — have blemishes on their credit reports because of overdue medical bills, while medical debts make up more than half of collection items on credit reports, according to a newly released” report from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The report follows the CFPB’s finding last spring that medical debt can unfairly harm credit scores. CFPB Director Richard Cordray stated, “When people fall ill and end up at the hospital with unexpected bills, far too often they have entered into a financial maze.”

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (12/12, Zibel) reports that Cordray said a lack of consistency in the industry can be confusing for consumers, as medical debts have no standard time frames for reporting. Some providers send debt to collections 30 days after a bill is unpaid, while others wait up to 180 days.

[US News & World Report](#) (12/11) reports that a recent study “by personal finance website NerdWallet found that \$21 billion in medical debt was collected from consumers in 2012, representing 38 percent of debt in collections.” The article examines several factors contributing to the prevalence of medical debt, including the fee-for-service payment model and waste in healthcare spending.

>50% Prescribed 30 Days of Opioids Still Taking 3 Years Later:

In a highly publicized Express Scripts study of over 36 million individuals ([LINK](#)), over half of those prescribed opioid pain medication for 30 days were still taking opioid medications for pain over three years later. In addition, over 60% of long term opioid users were taking dangerous and potentially fatal combinations of opioids with benzodiazepines.

Opioid Efficacy for Chronic Pain Not Substantiated:

In the context of the above, Chou et al., (Archives of Internal Medicine, January 13, 2015, [LINK](#)) synthesized data from studies examining opiate use for chronic pain.. They concluded: “No study of opioid therapy versus no opioid therapy evaluated long-term (>1 year) outcomes related to pain, function, quality of life, opioid abuse, or addiction. Good- and fair-quality observational studies suggest that opioid therapy for chronic pain is associated with increased risk for overdose, opioid abuse, fractures, myocardial infarction, and markers of sexual dysfunction, although there are few studies for each of these outcomes; for some harms, higher doses are associated with increased risk. Evidence on the effectiveness and harms of different opioid dosing and risk mitigation strategies is limited.”

Binge Drinking Deaths = 6/day 2010-2012:

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention published these and other related statistics on binge drinking at this [LINK](#)

CLINICAL PSYCHIATRY IN THE NEWS, IN BRIEF:

Psychedelics Prevent Suicide?

In a modestly publicized research report appearing in *Journal of Psychopharmacology* ([LINK](#)) Hendricks et al., “evaluated the relationships of classic psychedelic use with psychological distress and suicidality among over 190,000 USA adult respondents pooled from the last five available years of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2008–2012) while controlling for a range of covariates. Lifetime classic psychedelic use was associated with a significantly reduced odds of past month psychological distress (weighted odds ratio (OR)=0.81 (0.72–0.91)), past year suicidal thinking (weighted OR=0.86 (0.78–0.94)), past year suicidal planning (weighted OR=0.71 (0.54–0.94)), and past year suicide attempt (weighted OR=0.64 (0.46–0.89)), whereas lifetime illicit use of other drugs was largely associated with an increased likelihood of these outcomes.”

Marijuana Related Structural Changes?

In an imaging study of 48 marijuana users and 62 age and gender matched non-using controls, Filbey et al (PNAS 2014 [LINK](#)) found that “compared with controls, marijuana users had significantly less bilateral orbitofrontal gyri volume, higher functional connectivity in the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) network, and higher structural connectivity in tracts that innervate the OFC (forceps minor) as measured by fractional anisotropy (FA). Increased OFC functional connectivity in marijuana users was associated with earlier age of onset.”

New Nomenclature for Psychopharmacology?

In a report appearing in *Medscape* (11/4, Brauser [LINK](#)) the 27th European College of Neuropsychopharmacology Congress, the first phase of “a newly proposed psychotropic drug reclassification system, complete with app, has been unveiled in the hope that it will reduce confusion over contradictory-sounding terminology.”

Shift Work Dulls the Brain:

In a study publicized through the *BMJ* (*Occup Environ Med*, [LINK](#)), Marquie et al studied a cohort of over 3000 shift workers studied at three time points over 10 years. They found that “shift work was associated with impaired cognition. The association was stronger for exposure durations exceeding 10 years (dose effect; cognitive loss equivalent to 6.5 years of age-related decline in the current cohort). The recovery of cognitive functioning after having left shift work took at least 5 years (reversibility).”

PHQ-9 and Overdiagnosis of Depression?

In an exploratory observational study of nearly 550 patients, Jerant et al (*Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine* [LINK](#)) found that “administration of brief depression symptom measures, particularly the PHQ-9, may be associated with depression diagnosis and antidepressant recommendation and prescription among patients unlikely to have major depression. If these findings are confirmed, researchers should investigate the balance of benefits and risks (eg, overdiagnosis of depression and overtreatment with antidepressants) associated with use of a brief symptom measure.”

Teens Prescribed Anxiolytics More Likely to Abuse:

Research published in *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* (Boyd et al., 2014 [LINK](#)) used longitudinal study of nearly of over 2700 adolescents to demonstrate strong correlation between being prescribed anxiolytic medication in teenage years and future abuse: “ Compared with adolescents never prescribed anxiolytic or sleep medication, adolescents prescribed these medicines during the study period were 10 times more likely to engage in nonmedical use for reasons such as “to get high” or “to experiment” (adjusted odds ratio [OR_{adj.}] = 10.15; 95% CI [3.97–25.91]), and 3 times more likely to engage in nonmedical use to self-treat anxiety or to sleep (OR_{adj.} = 3.24; 95% CI [1.67–6.29]). Adolescents prescribed anxiolytics during their lifetime but not during the 3-year study were 12 times more likely to use another’s anxiolytic medication, compared with adolescents never prescribed anxiolytics (OR_{adj.} = 12.17; 95% CI [3.98–37.18]).”

Firearm Access Among Teens:

In a cross-sectional analysis of data from the National Comorbidity Survey-Adolescent Supplement, Simonetti et al (*JAMA Psychiatry* online first) found that one in three respondents reported living in a home with a firearm, of which 40.9% reported easy access to and the ability to shoot that firearm. “Adolescents with firearm access also had a higher lifetime prevalence of alcohol abuse (10.1% vs 3.8%, $P < 0.001$) and drug abuse (11.4% vs 6.9%, $P < .01$) compared with those without firearm access. In multivariable analyses, adolescents with a history of mental illness without a history of suicidality (prevalence ratio [PR], 1.13; 95% CI, 0.98-1.29) and adolescents with a history of suicidality with or without a history of mental illness (PR, 1.20; 95% CI, 0.96-1.51) were as likely to report in-home firearm access as those without such histories.”

Methamphetamine → Parkinson’s Disease:

In a retrospective of methamphetamine users, cocaine users, and non-users (*Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, [LINK](#)) Curtin et al. reported: “In METH/AMPH users, we observed an increased risk of PD and PD/PT (HRPD = 2.8, 95%CI 1.6–4.8, $P < 10^{-3}$; HRPD/PT = 3.1, 95%CI 1.9–4.9, $P < 10^{-4}$) compared to population-based controls. Conversely, cocaine users exhibited no elevated risk of PD compared to controls.”

Treatment for Mothers of Children Newly Diagnosed with ASD:

Given the challenges of a new diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in a child, Feinberg et al (*JAMA Pediatrics*, [LINK](#)) explored the impact of a brief cognitive behavioral intervention labeled problem-solving education (PSE) on parental stress levels. 59 were randomized to receive PSE, and 63 usual care. At 3 month follow-up, significantly lower parental stress levels were noted in the intervention group, while reduction in depressive symptoms did not meet statistical significance.

Mothers with Depression → Accelerated Cellular Aging in Children:

Appearing in *Molecular Psychiatry* in advanced online publication, Gotlib et al. showed that in 97 healthy young daughters either of mothers with recurrent depression, or those with no history of psychopathology, those with depressed mothers had shorter telomeres, associated with greater cortisol reactivity to stress, accelerated cellular aging.

fMRI Identification of Autism:

In research published in PLoS ONE, Just et al. ([LINK](#)) used fMRI studies while subjects imagined social interactions, for example a hug, comparing brain activity among 17 adults with high functioning autism and matched controls. “One prominent neural representation factor that emerged (manifested mainly in posterior midline regions) was related to self-representation, but this factor was present only for the control participants, and was near-absent in the autism group.”

Apnea → Microinfarct?

Using the Honolulu-Asia Aging Study, Gelber et al. (Neurology [LINK](#)) explored the impact of sleep disordered breathing on brain pathology at time of death. Subjects included “67 participants who underwent polysomnography in 1999–2000 (mean age, 84 years) and died through 2010 (mean 6.4 years to death).” Their findings included: “Sleep duration with SpO₂ <95% was associated with higher levels of microinfarcts (adjusted odds ratio [OR] 3.88, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.10–13.76, comparing the highest to lowest quartiles of %sleep with SpO₂ <95%). Greater SWS duration was associated with less generalized atrophy (adjusted OR 0.32, 95% CI 0.10–1.03, comparing highest to lowest quartiles of %sleep in SWS). LBs were less common with greater %sleep with SpO₂ <95% (adjusted OR 0.17, 95% CI 0.04–0.78, comparing highest to lowest quartiles). Higher minimum SpO₂ during REM sleep was associated with less gliosis and neuronal loss in the locus ceruleus. Cognitive scores declined less among men with greater SWS duration.”

Over 50% of British Antipsychotics Prescribed Off-Label:

In a BMJ Open article ([LINK](#)), Marston et al. identified 47,724 individuals prescribed antipsychotics finding that less than 50% carried a diagnosis of psychosis or bipolar disorder. They concluded that: “In UK primary care, a large proportion of people prescribed antipsychotics have no record of psychotic or bipolar disorder. They are often older people with conditions including dementia, non-psychotic depression, anxiety and sleep disorders.”

MR Spectroscopy for Depression?

As reported in Psychiatric News (Zagorski, [LINK](#)) the serendipitous finding of rapidly improved depression through echo-planar magnetic resonance spectroscopic imaging has led to the development of a small low-field magnetic stimulation device which could rival ketamine in speed of reversal of depressive symptoms and could open new treatment modalities.

Emotions Consolidate Memory:

In a study of post experience memory enhancement, Dunsmoore et al. (Nature [LINK](#)) demonstrated “in humans, that information is selectively consolidated if conceptually related information, putatively represented in a common neural substrate, is made salient through an emotional learning experience. Memory for neutral objects was selectively enhanced if other objects from the same category were paired with shock. Retroactive enhancements as a result of emotional learning were observed following a period of consolidation, but were not observed in an immediate memory test or for items strongly encoded before fear conditioning. These findings provide new evidence for a generalized retroactive memory enhancement, whereby inconsequential information can be retroactively credited as relevant, and therefore selectively remembered, if conceptually related information acquires salience in the future.”

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE POPULAR PRESS:

Feeling Younger = Younger Brain?

In a study of over 1300 individuals appearing in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* (Stephan et al. [LINK](#)) those with a younger subjective age at baseline (age 50-75) had better episodic memory and executive function at 10 year follow-up.

No Post-Concussion Strict Rest?

In research appearing in *Pediatrics* (Thomas et al., [LINK](#)) 99 patients (ages 11 to 22) seen in an Emergency Room within 24 hours of concussion were randomized to strict rest of 4 to 5 days, versus usual care of 1 to 2 days and asked to maintain diaries. 88 completed the study, with authors finding that strict rest provided no benefit and led to greater symptom reporting.

Optimism Protects the Heart?

PBS and other News outlets ran articles on research which correlated optimism with improve cardiovascular function. The research appeared in the journal (Hernandez et al. [LINK](#)). The authors "used data collected from adults aged 52-84 who participated in the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA) (N = 5134) during the first follow-up visit (2002-2004). Multinomial logistic regression was used to examine associations of optimism with ideal and intermediate CVH (with reference being poor CVH), after adjusting for socio-demographic factors and psychological ill-being. Results: Participants in the highest quartile of optimism were more likely to have intermediate [OR = 1.51, 95% CI = 1.25, 1.82] and ideal [OR = 1.92, 95% CI = 1.30, 2.85] CVH when compared to the least optimistic group. Individual CVH metrics of diet, physical activity, body mass index, smoking, blood sugar, and total cholesterol contributed to the overall association. Conclusions: We offer evidence for a cross-sectional association between optimism and CVH."

Parental Video Therapy to Prevent Autism?

In a small study appearing in *Lancet Psychiatry* (Green et al., [LINK](#)) the authors randomly assigned families with a 7 to 10 month old child at high risk for autism into treatment arm of video feedback therapy versus no intervention. Using the video recorded interactions between parent and child, the researchers trained the intervention group parents to be highly attentive to their child's cues, positively affecting the primary outcome of infant attentiveness to the parent.

Evidence of PTSD in 1300 BC:

In research reported on by the BBC (Gallagher, 1/24/2015, [LINK](#)) a team at "Anglia Ruskin University analysed translations from ancient Iraq or Mesopotamia" finding evidence of symptoms meeting modern criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder.

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY:

Marijuana Use Down Among Teens Despite Legalization:

As reported in the 12/16/2014 AMA Morning Rounds:

[USA Today](#) (12/16, Leger) reports that a national survey conducted by the University of Michigan's "Monitoring the Future" project found that "marijuana use among teens declined this year even as two states, Colorado and Washington, legalized the drug for recreational use." The survey also found "Abuse of all prescription drugs, including narcotic painkillers, sedatives and amphetamines, declined from 16% in 2013 to 14% in 2014 among 12th graders, the survey found. Narcotic painkiller use, in decline since 2009, dropped again from 7% in 2013 to 6% in 2014. Heroin use, which has grown among adult populations, remained stable for teens." According to Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Teens considered narcotic pain relievers, such as OxyContin and Vicodin, safer than illicit drugs such as heroin and cocaine, because they are prescribed by doctors.""

As reported in the AMA morning rounds of January 13:

The AP (1/13, Daly [LINK](#)) reports that the House of Representatives, "for the second time in five weeks...has approved a bill aimed at reducing a suicide epidemic that claims the lives of 22 military veterans every day." HR 5059, the Clay Hunt SAV Act, "a bill named for...a 26-year-old veteran who killed himself in 2011, was approved unanimously" yesterday. The measure "would require the Pentagon and the Veterans Affairs Department to submit to independent reviews of their suicide prevention programs and would establish a website to provide information on mental health services available to veterans."

Bring Back The Asylums?

In a widely publicized opinion piece appearing in JAMA ([LINK](#)), bioethicists Sisti, Segal and Emanuel argue that the shortage of psychiatric beds nationally has resulted in homelessness, incarceration, chronic emergency room visits or nursing home placement for the chronically mentally ill.

Children's Mental Health in Wisconsin

In an article appearing in the Wisconsin State Journal and at Madison.Com (Hall, 1/18/2015, [LINK](#)) sobering statistics regarding high suicide rates and poor access to mental health care are discussed along with the January 2014 appointment by Governor Walker of Elizabeth Hudson to direct the Office of Children's Mental Health.

Veteran's Suicide Prevention Bill:

On 1/21/15, with a 15 to 0 vote, the senate Veteran's Affairs Committee passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which would require at least annual third party evaluation of the VA's mental health care and suicide prevention programs (H.R. 5059 [LINK](#)).