

PSYCHIATRIC SUMMARY XIX

Fall 2016

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

OF GENERAL INTEREST

Boxed Warning for Benzos + Opiates:

The FDA instituted boxed warnings on benzodiazepines and opiates or related cough medicines given the clear risks of combining these medications, urging the combination be used only as last resort (USFDA 8/31/2016 [LINK](#)).

Greater than 50% Misuse Meds:

According to Quest Diagnostics' heavily publicized 2016 report, more than 50 percent of adults and 44% of children misuse their prescription medications putting themselves at risk ([LINK](#)).

Polypharmacy Problem:

Presented by Kaiser Health News as "America's Other Drug Problem", author Gorman (8/30/2016, [LINK](#)) explores the problem of geriatric polypharmacy in our nation.

CLINICAL PSYCHIATRY IN THE NEWS, IN BRIEF

Suicide Rates in Occupations 2012:

The CDC released its analysis of the nearly 40,000 suicides completed in 2012 ([LINK](#)). They concluded: Rates of suicide were highest in the following three occupational groups: farming, fishing, and forestry (84.5 suicides per 100,000 persons); construction and extraction (53.3); and installation, maintenance, and repair (47.9) (Table 2). Rates of suicide varied by sex, with higher rates among males than females in all occupational groups (Table 2). Among males, the highest suicide rates were among persons in the following three occupational groups: farming, fishing, and forestry (90.5 per 100,000); construction and extraction (52.5); and installation, maintenance, and repair (47.5). Among females, the highest suicide rates occurred among persons in the following three occupational groups: protective service occupations (e.g., law enforcement officers and firefighters) (14.1 per 100,000); legal (13.9); and healthcare practitioners and technical (13.3) (Table 2).

Methylene Blue for Memory?

Appearing in RSNA Radiology, Rodriguez et al. ([LINK](#)) report on blood flow and neuropsychological testing evidence of enhanced memory through ingestion of this stain.

Antipsychotics, Falls and Hip Fractures:

Reporting in J. Am. Ger. Soc., Bakken et al ([LINK](#)) found that among people in Norway age 60 and above, from 2004 to 2010, use of an antipsychotic medication for any reason was associated with twice the frequency of hip fracture during exposure to that medication.

Behavioral Activation versus CBT:

According to Richards et al. (The Lancet, [LINK](#)) Behavioral Activation Therapy may provide comparable benefit to depression at lower cost and requiring less provider training than Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

OCD Confers Almost 10 Fold Increased Risk of Suicide:

As reported in Nature Molecular Psychiatry (de la Cruz et al., [LINK](#)), among 36788 people in this Swedish population based study, having a diagnosis of obsessive compulsive disorder conferred an odds ratio of 9.83 of dying by suicide and 5.45 of attempting suicide.

Opioid Epidemic Treatment Claims:

According to a FAIR Health report ([LINK](#)) claims for opiate addiction treatment rose over 3000 percent from 2007 to 2014.

Marijuana and Subclinical Psychosis:

Appearing in The American Journal of Psychiatry (Bechtold et al. [LINK](#)), this study of self-reported marijuana use 1009 first and seventh grade recruited boys, found that:

For each year adolescent boys engaged in regular marijuana use, their expected level of subsequent subclinical psychotic symptoms rose by 21% and their expected odds of experiencing subsequent subclinical paranoia or hallucinations rose by 133% and 92%, respectively. The effect of prior regular marijuana use on subsequent subclinical psychotic symptoms persisted even when adolescents stopped using marijuana for a year. These effects were after controlling for all time-stable and several time-varying confounds. No support was found for reverse causation.

Substance Use in US:

As appearing in Rice University publicity online (Falk, 8/15/2016, [LINK](#)) "New Baker Institute charts provide picture of drug use in the United States". The data indicate alcohol as the leading cause of substance related morbidity and mortality and contradict the marijuana as "gateway drug" claims. Other findings include limited overall progression to harder substance use, as well as indicating overall stability of substance use despite the ongoing "war on drugs".

Physical Activity vs Cognitive Decline:

Kim and colleagues published on the effects of physical activity on cognitive function and neural connectivity (Frontiers in Neuroscience, [LINK](#)). Among 76 elderly recruits, those in the high physical activity group showed better performance in speed processing and increased regional nodal strength in attentional networks as measured by 3T MRI.

Nix the Brain Training?

In a heavily publicized review appearing in Psychological Sciences in the Public Interest, Simons et al. ([LINK](#)) provided a systematic evaluation and review of all of the peer-reviewed brain training related articles cited by proponents of brain training and related companies listed on Cognitive Training Data (www.cognitivetrainingdata.org). The authors concluded:

Based on this examination, we find extensive evidence that brain-training interventions improve performance on the trained tasks, less evidence that such interventions improve performance on closely related tasks, and little evidence that training enhances performance on distantly related tasks or that training improves everyday cognitive performance. We also find that many of the published intervention studies had major shortcomings in design or analysis that preclude definitive conclusions about the efficacy of training, and that none of the cited studies

conformed to all of the best practices we identify as essential to drawing clear conclusions about the benefits of brain training for everyday activities. We conclude with detailed recommendations for scientists, funding agencies, and policymakers that, if adopted, would lead to better evidence regarding the efficacy of brain-training interventions.

SSRIs in Pregnancy and Speech, Academic and Motor Pathology in Offspring:

In a prospective population based study in Finland (Brown et al., JAMA Psychiatry, [LINK](#)) the authors studied speech/language, scholastic, and motor disorders through age 14 in children divided into groups of SSRI exposure, mental health concerns in mothers who did not take SSRIs, and unexposed groups.

Of the 56 340 infants included in the final cohort, 28 684 (50.9%) were male and 48 782 (86.6%) were 9 years or younger. The mean (SD) ages of children at diagnosis were 4.43 (1.67), 3.55 (2.67), and 7.73 (2.38) for speech/language, scholastic, and motor disorders, respectively. Offspring of mothers who purchased SSRIs at least twice during pregnancy had a significant 37% increased risk of speech/language disorders compared with offspring in the unmedicated group. The cumulative hazard of speech/language disorders was 0.0087 in the SSRI-exposed group vs 0.0061 in the unmedicated group (hazard ratio, 1.37; 95% CI, 1.11-1.70; P = .004). There was a significantly increased risk of these disorders in offspring in the SSRI-exposed and unmedicated groups compared with offspring in the unexposed group. For scholastic and motor disorders, there were no differences between offspring in the SSRI-exposed group and in the unmedicated group.

Herbal and Dietary Supplements Linked to Liver Injury:

Writing in Hepatology (Nevarro et al., [LINK](#)) Nevarro et al profess warnings regarding Herbal and Dietary Supplements (HDS) related toxic phenomenon. They write that:

HDS-induced liver injury now accounts for 20% of cases of hepatotoxicity in the United States based on research data. The major implicated agents include anabolic steroids, green tea extract, and multi-ingredient nutritional supplements (MINS).

Memantine for Negative Psychotic Symptoms:

In a placebo-controlled double-blind study of 46 adult male patients with schizophrenia (Psychiatry Research, [LINK](#)) Mazinani et al., studied the effects of 20 mg daily dosing of memantine on symptoms of schizophrenia. They reported that:

Positive and general psychopathologic symptoms showed no significant differences between the two groups at baseline or after treatment; while negative symptoms improved significantly in the intervention group at week 12. Cognitive function was also significantly improved in the intervention group at weeks 6 and 12. Memantine is supported as an effective adjunct treatment to improve negative and cognitive symptoms in patients with schizophrenia.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE POPULAR PRESS

Novel Post Partum Treatment:

Reporting in USA Today (7/12/2016, [LINK](#)) Eli Blumenthal reported on successful better than placebo response from Sage Therapeutic's new treatment, currently referred to as SAGE-547.

Guns and Suicide:

The Washington Post wades into gun access debates (Kim Soffen, 7/13/2016, [LINK](#)) writing on statistical comparison of US suicide rate and suicide by firearm rate to those in other similar nations.

Shortage of Beds:

Appearing in the 8/3/2016 AMA newsletter:

[PBS NewsHour](#) (8/2, Ollove) carries a Stateline article on its “The Rundown” blog that reports the US is suffering from a critical need of additional state psychiatric beds. Mental health proponents say the shortage forces “mentally ill patients with severe symptoms to be held in emergency rooms, hospitals and jails while they” have to wait, sometimes for weeks, for a bed. One source estimates the US needs over 120,000 psychiatric hospital beds, which won’t be easy due to state budget cuts. Despite calls for public funding on community mental health to increase in recent years, the recession has resulted in states cutting “\$4.35 billion in public mental health spending between 2009 and 2012, though some states have made modest increases since 2012.”

Holistic Mental Health:

The New York Times (Carey, 8/8/2016, [LINK](#)) ran an extensive article on alternative approaches to mental health treatment, including groups for those who hear voices, and “The Open Dialogue approach involves a team of mental health specialists who visit homes and discuss the crisis with the affected person — without resorting to diagnostic labels or medication, at least in the beginning.”

To Find a Psychiatrist:

Citing two studies by Bishop et al, journalist Humphreys (The Washington Post, 9/2/16, [LINK](#)) opines that declines in psychiatrists overall, in conjunction with the high number of psychiatrists who accept only cash, as additive factors in the challenge for access to mental health care.

ADHD and Suicide in Children:

The New York Times (Saint Louis, 9/19/2016, [LINK](#)) reported on a recent study by Sheftall et al. (Pediatrics, [LINK](#)) which analyzed data from the National Violent Death Reporting System from 2003 to 2012 in 17 US States. The authors reported:

Among suicide decedents with known mental health problems (n = 210), childhood decedents more often experienced attention-deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (59.3% vs 29.0%; P = .002) and less often experienced depression/dysthymia (33.3% vs 65.6%; P = .001) compared with early adolescent decedents.

Suicide Spike Underscores Bed Shortage:

As reported in the September 19 AMA Morning Report:

[PBS NewsHour](#) (9/18, Segal) reports a recent spike in suicides in the US has raised concerns about the small number of psychiatric beds in the US for suicidal patients and others in need of psychiatric care. The article points out that the number of psychiatric beds for patients per capita in the US decreased by 95% between 1955 and 2005, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Alternative Autism Treatment:

The Atlantic Monthly (Alisa Opar, 9/22/2016, [LINK](#)) explored the lengths that parents will go to in an effort to find some form of treatment to reverse the impact of autism on their child. These approaches range from chelation to hyperbaric to psychic therapies. Quoting the article:

“It’s a cottage industry of false hope,” says [Paul Offit](#), professor of pediatrics at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and author of “[Autism’s False Prophets](#),” a book about dubious causes and cures. “To me, taking advantage of parents’ desperate desire to do anything to help their children is the lowest form of quackery.”

Barriers to AODA Treatment:

USA Today (DeMio and O'Donnell, 9/26/16, [LINK](#)) ran an article on the challenges of receiving AODA treatment caused by insurance policies despite mental health parity.

Over 1/3 Veteran Suicide Hotline Calls Unanswered:

As appearing in the AMA Morning Rounds of 9/27/2016:

The [AP](#) (9/26, Daly) reports the House is expected to vote on a bill that would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to “ensure that all telephone calls, text messages and other communications received by the crisis line are answered in a timely manner by an appropriately qualified person.” The article reports that according to a former director of a suicide hotline for veterans, more than one-third of the calls received “are not being answered by front-line staffers because of poor work habits and other problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs.”

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY**Decline in Psychiatric Beds:**

The Washington Post reported on the historic low number of psychiatric beds available in state hospitals and how a majority are occupied by patients from the criminal justice system (Beachum, 7/1/16, [LINK](#)).

House Passes HR2646:

The House of Representatives passed long awaited mental health reform legislation in July. The HR2646, also known as Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act can be browsed here: [LINK](#).

National Governors Association on Opiates:

The NGA, with Governor Walker among them, is exploring ways to combat the opiate epidemic in our nation with this Compact released on 6/13/2016 [LINK](#).

New Hampshire Grapples with Gun Reporting:

According to the New Hampshire Union Leader (Dave Solomon, 7/27/2016, [LINK](#)) efforts to report the dangerously mentally ill to the FBI gun-buyers background check proved to be too vague for the judicial branch to begin the reporting.

Racial/Ethnic Disparities:

According to Marrast et al., appearing in International Journal of Health Services ([LINK](#)) the authors “conclude that psychiatric and behavioral problems among minority youth often result in school punishment or incarceration, but rarely mental health care.”

Prescriptionless Naloxone:

Governor Walker announced a statewide standing order authorizing pharmacists to dispense Naloxone without prescription ([LINK](#)).

Variable MH School Services:

Kaiser Health News (Jenny Gold, 9/13/2016, [LINK](#)) ran an article on the variability of mental health services offered in schools and the struggles parents have in finding care, citing a statistic that just 38% of students with a mood disorder receive services.