Greetings,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the University of Illinois Center on Depression and Resilience (UI CDR) newsletter. UI CDR officially launched to fanfare last fall on October 21st 2014 at the Moss Auditorium. Former U.S. Congressman Patrick Kennedy, an impassioned crusader for mental health advocacy, spoke to the assembled department, faculty, colleagues, and supporters.

UI CDR is a multidisciplinary initiative that brings together clinicians, educators, and researchers committed to personalized patient care and innovative research. We aim to improve the quality of life and their families by bringing cutting-edge, evidence-based approaches to understand, detect, monitor, and treat mood disorders.

As the only National Network for Depression Center (NNDC) node in Chicagoland, we are dedicated to finding answers to the following questions so that we can better detect, prevent, treat and promote resilience and recovery across the lifespan. We are making tremendous strides in addressing the following questions:

- How early can we identify those likely to suffer from depression?
- What psychotherapy and pharmacologic treatments are most effective? And for whom?
- What are the neurobiological substrates that underlie mood disorder and resilience?
- What tools and strategies can we develop to help patients bounce back sooner, stay better longer, and minimize the devastating burden of these disorders?

A little over a year after we’ve launched, I am pleased to highlight some of the Center’s remarkable accomplishments as UI CDR Researchers make progress answering these questions, including:

- Organizing the first-of-its-kind study on the effect of long-term alcohol exposure on genes
- Exploring avenues for more advanced and effective PTSD care for veterans
- Establishing biomarkers that can identify clinical depression
As we move forward, I hope that you will both celebrate our accomplishments with me and advocate for mental health awareness and support in your communities and networks.

UI CDR PARTNERS WITH KENNEDY FORUM FOR “A NEW PARADIGM” IN MENTAL HEALTH

University of Illinois Center on Depression & Resilience (UI CDR) was honored to be a cosponsor of the Kennedy Forum & Gala Event on November 11, 2015 at the Hilton Chicago, which brought together more than 500 people. The aim of the event, titled “A New Paradigm,” was to advance the Forum in its mission to end stigma around mental health and substance use disorder, while revolutionizing the way mental health care is addressed in America. It is a mission synchronous to the aim of UI CDR and central to our partnership with the Kennedy Forum over the past year.

“Kennedy Forum provides a powerful mechanism to disseminate new developments in the science of mental health with the greater Chicagoland area.” Dr. Anand Kumar, Director of the UI CDR, said of the partnership.

Dr. Kumar, who also led a breakout session at the event, went on to explain that the relationship is reciprocal, as UI CDR also provides the science that informs the advocacy and policy work the Kennedy Forum is engaged in.

The event covered a diverse range of mental health topics through 4 plenary sessions, 3 breakouts, and 8 workshops. UI CDR seeks to make transformational advances in the understanding and treatment of
mood disorders, including increasing access to care—specifically among the most vulnerable populations—by reducing stigma, removing barriers, and addressing social determinants.

One in five Illinois residents experiences a diagnosable mental disorder every year according to a statewide interagency mental health services strategic plan, yet nearly 56 percent of adults who need mental health services actually receive them.

In a plenary on “Science Informed Mental Health Policy” presented by UI CDR Leadership this dilemma was addressed head-on from a diverse range of perspectives that exemplified the Center’s varied approach.

As panel moderator Dr. Mark Rasenick, part of UI CDR Leadership, explained to the assembly there are two groups that go untreated: “One that doesn’t have appropriate access to care and another that doesn’t seek care because of the stigma they feel themselves.”

He further posed to an audience of service providers, civic and business leaders, mental health professionals, policy influencers and activists, “So, how do we fix this?”

UI CDR Leadership on the panel represented a range of solutions to inform a policy conversation. From biology to systems change, technology to redefining the concept of mental health various perspectives were put forward from the front of the room. While Dr. Rasenick focuses his research on identifying biomarkers in the blood—he has spent almost three decades studying the biology of mood disorders, G-protein signaling, and its interaction with structural proteins in the brain—that can lead to identifying clinical depression his perspectives were balanced with using a more public health approach to mental health.
Dr. Pauline Maki, Director of Women’s Mental Health Research, shared with the plenary audience an initiative that would not be possible without the UI CDR and its versatile problem solving approach. Dr. Maki is collaborating with Dr. Jennifer Duffecy, Director of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Services and Research in Adult Mood Disorders, whose expertise is in integrating technology into evidence based care applications.

Their new partnership teaches physicians, midwives, and OB-GYN to screen low income, predominately minority, pregnant mothers for depression as a routine part of their perinatal care. These women would not be likely to seek healthcare, let alone mental health care, if they weren’t pregnant.

“The project recognizes that these women aren’t likely to seek care for depression on their own. To get them access for treatment of depression when they come in for needed health care, that is, when they are pregnant, gives us an opportunity to screen them and treat them.” Dr. Maki explains. “Perinatal depression treatment at UIC is really major depression treatment at UIC.”

Dr. Duffecy adds, “While technological innovations—websites, smart phones, tablets and SMS frameworks—will never displace traditional treatment models they do help us to navigate around some physical barriers, such as childcare and transportation issues.”

This project is exemplary of the kind of collaborative, solution-oriented work around depression and mood disorders that the UI CDR accomplishes organizing all of the exceptional multidisciplinary research on depression and resilience across campus under a single umbrella with a unified mission.

“The UI CDR harnesses multiple strengths related to mood disorder across the University focused on a single aim.” Dr. Kumar observes. “This is why it was organized in this way in the first place.”

Dr. Marc Atkins, Director of the Institute for Juvenile Research and part of UI CDR Leadership and Dr. Nicole Kazee, Director of Health Policy and Programs for the Office of the Vice President of Health Affairs at UIC also spoke on the panel. In the same paradigm shifting tenor that discussed the role technology could play for increasing accessibility and reach, Dr. Atkins shared insights from 25 years of service research. Dr. Atkins suggested bridging the gap in mental health services with children and adolescents by exploring natural supports—schools, playgrounds and even home settings—where mental health services can be integrated into the setting as an augmentation of the clinic model.

The discourse was lively and engaging complimenting the overarching theme of social change that resonated throughout the events of the day. In partnership with Kennedy Forum, transformational advances on mood disorders and mental health can be made.
UI CDR RESEARCHER OFFERS HOPE FOR MILITARY VETERANS SUFFERING FROM PTSD

DEPRESSION CENTER LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dr. Anand Kumar, M.D., Lizzie Gilman Professor and Head of the Department

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Dr. Marc Atkins, Ph.D., Director of the Institute for Juvenile Research

Dr. Scott Langenecker, Ph.D, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology, Director of Cognitive Neuroscience Center

Dr. Pauline Maki, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology, Director of Women’s Mental Health Research

Dr. K. Luan Phan, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology and Anatomy & Cell Biology, Director of the Mood and Anxiety Disorders Research Program and Associate Head for Clinical and Translational Research; Chief of Neuropsychiatric Research at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center

Dr. Mark Rasenick, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Physiology and Biophysics and Psychiatry

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