

Iraq and Afghanistan Teach Us New Lessons about Mental Health

There are many intersections between the APA and the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps the most important one is that many APA members are deployed in conflict zones, providing much needed care to our soldiers. However, the APA and its members also play other key roles, including:

- urging Congress to increase funds for veterans' mental health;
- conducting and publishing research about the psychiatric consequences of war, as well as effective treatments for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other disorders; and
- educating the public, the news media and policymakers about mental health and illnesses.

Studies have shown high prevalence rates of PTSD and depression among returning soldiers. As associate director of the Center for Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University School of Medicine, I know that, in addition to what these studies show, combat affects every member of the military, emotionally and mentally.

Many psychiatrists across the country have been called on to provide care for a veteran or a veteran's family member. This is particularly true with respect to members of the National Guard and their families, who are often less connected to military bases and

Veterans Administration services, either because of distance or a lack of day-to-day interaction with the base. While providing care to these patients is necessary and important, some psychiatrists may also feel ill-equipped.

As I recently told the APA Board of Trustees, there are many "teachable moments" resulting from the United States' involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan—including helping to educate APA members about:

- assessing trauma associated with combat exposure;
- developing competency in identifying combat-related disorders;
- taking opportunities to do pro bono work with families whose members are in combat; and
- understanding "unique factors" that characterize military culture—the understanding of which will help the psychiatrist better treat patients affected by their or their loved one's combat experience.

The current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan touch us all. But they also yield new insights into combat-related disorders and culturally-appropriate care and treatment. I hope you will join me and our APA colleagues in reaching out to meet the mental health needs of members of the military and their families.

By Stephen J. Cozza, M.D.



Col. Stephen J. Cozza, M.D., associate director of the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, chief of Child and Family Programs, and Dept. of Psychiatry at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Using My Voice to Strengthen My Profession

It is vital for members in training (MITs) and early career psychiatrists (ECPs) to have a voice in the APA, our professional organization. Elected by my peers to represent the APA/SAMHSA fellowship on the APA's Board of Trustees, I have had many exceptional opportunities to contribute to the APA and use my voice.

At the July 2006 Board meeting, for example, APA President Pedro Ruiz, M.D., appointed me to help review and expand the APA's communications and public affairs efforts. Together with five other Board members, I helped make recommendations that will better equip the APA's Office of Communications & Public Affairs to help wipe out stigma and offer the public an accurate, informed view of psychiatry and mental health.

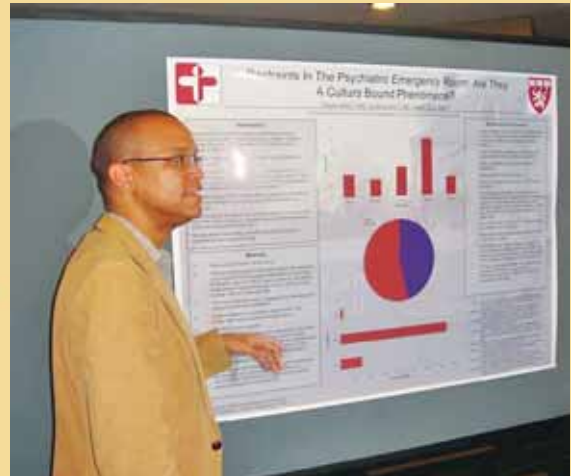
The APA's Committee on APA/Business Relations has been another wonderful experience for me, both to participate in and from which to grow. The committee helps foster collaboration between the APA, the mental health community, and businesses and insurers. At the 2006 annual meeting, I chaired a component workshop that fully explored "Winning the Fight for Mental Health Benefits: Partnering with Employers." Given that American employers finance more than half of the healthcare economy, it is key that the APA be able to promote the "business case for quality mental health care."

More recently, I had the chance to contribute a commentary to *Psychiatric News*. Entitled "Consider Patients' Mental Health, Not Just Mental Illness," it appeared in the Dec. 1, 2006, issue.

In part, I wrote: "In many medical specialties there are key concepts of health promotion and disease prevention, but in psychiatry there is an emphasis on mental illness. I propose that we conceptualize our psychiatric patients in a frame of mental health, not mental illness. It is the unfortunate truth that by conceptualizing our patients in terms of mental illness, we foster a problem-based schism of the individual."

It was my hope that my commentary would help spur a discussion among my colleagues—an exchange that may eventually aid in the eradication of mental illness stigma and make it much easier for us—as physicians—to find the person amidst the fog of mental disease.

Tearing down stigma and winning the fight for mental health benefits are years-long journeys, but we are stronger because we work together through the APA. Through organization, discussion and action—facilitated by our professional organization—I believe we can achieve our goals. I, for one, deeply appreciate having so many opportunities to use my voice to strengthen my profession and encourage you to join in this vital conversation, as well.



Dauda A. Griffin, M.D., served as chairperson for the component workshop, "Winning the Fight for Mental Health Benefits: Partnering with Employers," sponsored by the APA's Committee on APA/Business Relationships, at the APA annual meeting in Toronto.

By Dauda A. Griffin, M.D.



Dauda A. Griffin, M.D., APA/SAMHSA fellow in child and adolescent psychiatry at Emory University School of Medicine and APA Board Member.

Leadership

Through advocacy, professional training, public education, research or other programs and services, the APA provides leadership and valuable services to its members—services that strengthen the global profession of psychiatry. In 2006, the APA supported and represented its members on a range of initiatives to unite and advance the interests of APA members and the profession.



Taking a Stand against Interrogations. The APA approved an official position statement barring psychiatrists from participating in interrogations of prisoners and detainees at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and elsewhere. In keeping with its highest ethical standards, the APA, along with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, also praised the American Medical Association for its new policy prohibiting physicians' participation in interrogations.

Collaborating with British Colleagues. APA President Pedro Ruiz, M.D., led a group of APA members to the annual meeting of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Glasgow, Scotland. Both groups agreed to work together on various issues of mutual interest and to develop joint presentations at future meetings.

Supporting Child Healthcare. The APA strongly supported congressional action on the Child Healthcare Crisis Relief Act. The legislation would address the critical national shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists and other children's mental health professionals by creating educational incentives to encourage people to enter these fields. The bill would allow for an increase in the number of child and adolescent psychiatrists permitted under the Medicare Graduate Medical Education Program and extend the board eligibility period for residents and fellows from four years to six years.



APA President Pedro Ruiz, M.D., posed with Professor Sheila Hollins, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, while attending the annual meeting of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Glasgow, Scotland.



U.S. Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.) and Benjamin Liptzin, M.D., at the APA's 2006 Advocacy Day.

Advocating on the Hill. APA members from 43 states and D.C. headed to Capitol Hill for the APA's Advocacy Day, March 26–29. The event offered a platform for educating elected officials and their staffs about key mental health issues. In all, APA members visited some 250 House and Senate offices.

Providing Medicare Part D Information. The APA-sponsored Web site, www.MentalHealthPartD.org, served as a single source for psychiatrists and others seeking the latest information on Medicare Part D, the new federal prescription drug benefit program.

Expanding the Library's Web Presence. A valuable APA resource, the Melvin Sabshin Library & Archives, significantly expanded its Web-based offerings to members and the public. Guides to many of the archival special collections are now available to members on-line. The "Tests & Measurements" collection has acquired over a hundred new full-text tests. The "Psychiatry on the Internet" resource guide now provides access to reliable, consumer-focused resources (including foreign-language materials), and two new sections on psychopharmacology and the history of psychiatry. All are available through the APA's Web site, www.psych.org.



U.S. Rep James P. McGovern (D-Mass.) spoke with Donna M. Norris, M.D., who was then Area I trustee, at Advocacy Day.



American Psychiatric Association
Political Action Committee

APAPAC: A Remarkable Year Representing the APA's Interests

On Nov. 7, 2006—Election Day—106 of the 123 APAPAC-supported candidates that were up for election or re-election won their races—a remarkable record in a year of major upsets. The APAPAC Board of Directors worked to balance support of candidates from both the Democratic and Republican parties. The board also sought to maintain access to key Democratic and Republican members serving on various committees and subcommittees of importance to members and patients. Overall the APAPAC proved to be the most balanced medical specialty political action committee (PAC) in D.C.:

- A summation of the number of contributions made by the APAPAC shows 54 percent of contributions went to Democratic candidates

and committees and 46 percent went to Republican candidates and committees.

- Dollar calculations show 55 percent of our funds went to Republicans and 45 percent went to Democrats.

Throughout the 2005-2006 election cycle, 3,275 APA members and staff contributed \$480,000 to APAPAC. APAPAC put those funds to use immediately, distributing over \$375,000 to 142 candidates for Congress, representing 47 states, and other party-affiliated political committees. APAPAC hosted 94 events for members of Congress and enabled APA members to meet personally with 32 members of Congress and deliver contributions.

The APAPAC board remains dedicated to putting APA member funds to the best possible use for the profession and patients.



John Wernert, M.D., APAPAC chair, with U.S. Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) at the Advocacy Day PAC reception.



Tom Noyes, M.D., the APA's Committee on Government Relations Area VI representative, William Callahan, M.D., APAPAC board member, and U.S. Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.) at the APA's Advocacy Day.