

A VOICE FOR PARITY

District Branches and State Association Voices in Action on Parity

As a practicing psychiatrist for nearly 20 years, I know the importance of advocacy for good, effective public policy for the millions of Americans who have treatable mental health problems, such as schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety. Ensuring that mental health patients have health insurance that covers the treatment of mental illnesses equal to physical illnesses and injuries is a policy that I have strongly advocated for on behalf of my patients and the South Carolina Psychiatric Association (SCPA).

The South Carolina Legislature passed a mental health parity bill that covers state employees and some large employers. However, because many health plans are governed by federal law rather than state law, a federal law would more than double the number of people protected in South Carolina.

The SCPA, responding to and working in partnership with the American Psychiatric Association, led an all-out effort in South Carolina to raise public awareness of the U.S. Senate's Mental Health Parity Act after passage of the legislation was blocked on two occasions by South Carolina's own U.S. Senator Jim DeMint. In addition to organizing a telephone campaign to his office, we took our arguments to the media, issuing a press release and publishing two opinion editorials in South Carolina's biggest newspapers. SCPA members engaged Senator DeMint and his staff in conversations to encourage the senator to release his hold on the passage of this important bill. Additionally, residents at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston and the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Columbia organized a letter writing and telephone campaign. Eventually, Senator DeMint released his hold, and the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007 passed the U.S. Senate by voice vote. This was a significant victory in our ongoing educational and advocacy efforts.

As president of one of the APA's State Associations, I have seen first hand how our District Branches and State Associations and their members are key partners in the ongoing effort to combat stigma, improve access to appropriate care, and above all, increase the understanding of mental illnesses. I have also seen how residents can make a tremendous impact in advocacy efforts. Our grassroots involvement makes a difference in our patients' lives.



BY RICHARD FRIERSON, M.D.,
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A VOICE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Let's Talk Facts Brochure Series



BY SURINDER S. NAND, M.D., *Chair of APA Committee of Asian American Psychiatrists and Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Associate Director, Psychiatry Residency Training and Education Program University of Illinois at Chicago.*

There are many ways we can use our voices to bring attention to mental health. Through resources like the *Let's Talk Facts* brochure series, we can reach consumers and patients who need solid information about mental health, mental health care and mental illnesses. By providing accurate information in simple terms, the *Let's Talk Facts* brochures help in the fight against stigma that is often associated with mental illnesses.

The *Let's Talk Facts* brochures provide consumer information about common mental health issues like depression, anxiety and alcohol use. Some titles provide background information about specialized communities like college students, Hispanics or African Americans.

As chair of the APA's Committee on Asian Psychiatrists, I was involved in creating a *Let's Talk Facts* brochure aimed at a multi-cultural audience of the Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders. My committee participated in the planning and editing of the brochure copy. A fact sheet, based on the brochure, was published first on HealthyMinds.org. The printed brochure will be available to order through American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., in 2008.

The goal of our brochure is to shed light on key issues and unique qualities that impact mental health and barriers to care for various Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. We address causes, symptoms and treatment for disorders commonly encountered in these communities.

I encourage APA members to review the *Let's Talk Facts* brochure series and place relevant titles in their offices. These brochures can supplement information psychiatrists provide patients and supply accurate information that patients and their family members can take home and process in their own time. The brochures provide vital information about mental health and reinforce the APA message that "treatment works."

"Thank you for preparing these brochures and for making them available to the public. I have been able to use them with a neighbor who was trying to understand what his sister was going through when she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She is hesitant to seek help, unsure who to go see, and feeling very much alone. I hope this information will help her take the first step towards getting help."

— Email regarding the *Let's Talk Facts* Brochure Series



OUR VOICE IN ACTION *for Patients*

The APA used its voice in 2007 to promote high quality care for patients, transform public perception of mental illnesses and promote mental health through advocacy efforts on state and federal levels.

Continuing the Campaign on Mental Health. The year 2007 marked the third for the APA's "Healthy Minds. Healthy Lives." campaign. The 2007 campaign used its award-winning consumer Web site, HealthyMinds.org, to portray compelling patient testimonials in the form of podcasts and a "Mind and Body" health quiz that tested visitors' knowledge of mental and physical health. The campaign included a four-week National Public Radio sponsorship, reaching public radio listeners coast to coast and across a variety of top programs, including *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, *The Diane Rehm Show*, and *Latino USA*. The radio spots directed listeners to HealthyMinds.org.

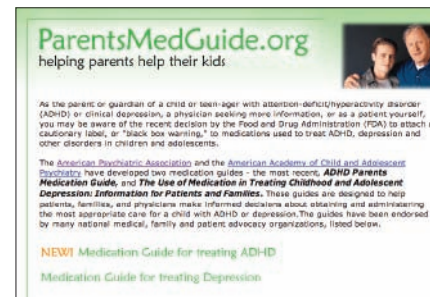


Protecting Access to ADHD Medications. The APA and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry released a new medication guide for parents on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The guide provides information on symptoms, treatment options, medication types, side effects, and co-occurring disorders. The ADHD Parents Medication Guide is the latest addition to the ParentsMedGuide.org online resource center providing practical advice for parents of children and adolescents with mental health disorders.

Reducing Stigma for Military and Veterans. The APA supported improved access to mental health care and efforts to reduce stigma for veterans, military members and their families. During Mental Illness Awareness Week, the APA collaborated with the National Alliance on Mental Illness and other partners to draw attention to veterans and military personnel suffering from mental illnesses, such as depression and posttraumatic stress disorder.



Crossing the Prison Barriers in Mental Health. In 2007, the APA continued to draw attention to the large numbers of people with mental illnesses who are inappropriately incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons though most would be better served through community-based mental health services. The APA called for an end to the "criminalization of the mentally ill" through grassroots advocacy efforts facilitated by the Department of Government Relations.



Facing page: Col. Elspeth C. Ritchie, M.D., psychiatry consultant to the U.S. Army Surgeon General, addressed the mental health needs of members of the military during the annual Mental Illness Awareness Week symposium sponsored by APA and NAMI.

Below: APA members from the Gulf Coast area serve as panelists during an OMNA on Tour session. Pictured (l-r) Elizabeth C. Henderson, M.D., representative of the Mississippi Psychiatric Association; Rahn K. Bailey, M.D., deputy-representative for the APA's Black Psychiatrists; and Jacqueline M. Feldman, M.D., chair of the Scientific Program Committee for IPS.

Improving Care for New Mothers. The APA and the Illinois Psychiatric Society were instrumental in the passage of the Melanie Blocker Stokes Postpartum Depression Research and Care Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 382 to 3.

Working to End Mental Health Care Disparities. The APA's Office of Minority & National Affairs (OMNA) continued its educational initiative, OMNA on Tour, in conjunction with the Institute on Psychiatric Services in New Orleans. OMNA on Tour encourages dialogue aimed at identifying and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in mental health care in local communities.

Spotlighting Suicide Prevention. In recognition of National Suicide Prevention Week, the APA and the American Psy-

chiatric Foundation re-launched a public service announcement entitled "Father/Son," to the top 25 television markets and posted it on the consumer Web site HealthyMinds.org. Toolkits that included the PSA, an overview letter and media outreach letters were sent to the district branches.

Promoting Mental Health in Multicultural Communities. The *Let's Talk Facts* consumer brochure series added new topics describing mental health needs in multicultural communities. The new brochures focus on the unique mental health needs of Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans and Alaska Natives. Other new topics added to the series: panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, seasonal affective disorder, psychiatric dimensions of HIV/AIDS, and college students and alcohol abuse.

Speaking out Against Stigma: The APA continued to use its voice to combat stigma when offensive ads depicting unhealthy views of suicide surfaced from Volkswagen. The APA joined with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Mental Health America, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness in a successful effort to convince the company to remove the ads.

Ensuring Equal Access to Care. The APA has long advocated for public policy that provides insurance to cover treatment of mental illnesses on par with physical illnesses and injuries. The APA's district branches in South Carolina and Pennsylvania provided grassroots outreach in support of mental health parity in their push for the passage of the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007. The APA continues to work to bring a federal parity bill into law.





American Psychiatric Foundation Advancing Public Understanding of Mental Illnesses

In September 2007, Paul T. Burke was appointed executive director of the American Psychiatric Foundation. Burke immediately began to infuse his experience into the work of the foundation on a variety of key issues: fundraising for APA and APF programs; public education on mental illnesses and treatments; research on improved access to care, particularly in underserved communities; and outreach to medical students. Prior to Burke's appointment and throughout 2007, a dedicated foundation staff assured the continuity and integrity of all foundation activities. These initiatives include:

- THE PARTNERSHIP FOR WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH continued to advance effective employer approaches to mental health in 2007. The Partnership and *Employee Benefit News*, a leading publication for HR professionals, teamed up to release a nationwide survey of employers in which mental illness was selected as the health issue that has the most impact on indirect costs. The Partnership also expanded its resources by launching the Employer Innovations Online, a Web-based, searchable database that profiles innovative programs and practices for addressing mental health in the workplace.

- APF AND SIX PROMINENT PHYSICIAN, PATIENT AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS — collectively known as the *Depression Is Real* Coalition — created a successful public education campaign about depression. The campaign imparts a message of hope through public service announcements (PSA), print and radio ads. The PSA campaign received more than \$13 million in donated media,



and was featured in popular magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Health* and *Marie Claire*. The public education campaign also includes a weekly podcast, *The Down & Up Show*, which features interviews with top experts on depression as well as people who have been impacted by the illness.



Brooke Shields sat down with APA President-elect Nada L. Stotland, M.D., M.P.H., to discuss her bout with postpartum depression for the "Conversations" event of the American Psychiatric Foundation at the APA's 2007 annual meeting in San Diego. Shields pictured with APA past-President Michelle Riba; APF President Altha Stewart, M.D.; and Dr. Stotland.

- APF CONTINUES TO RESPOND to unmet mental health needs by providing grants and awards to foster and recognize philanthropy in underserved communities. The Helping Hands Grant Program awards grants to medical schools for student-run community mental health service activities, particularly in underserved communities. The Awards for Advancing Minority Mental Health recognize psychiatrists, other health professionals and mental health programs that have undertaken innovative efforts to raise awareness, increase access, and improve quality of care among underserved minorities.

- THE FOUNDATION CONTINUED WORKING with the Jed Foundation to develop and implement a public education project promoting mentally healthy transitions from high school to college. Goals of the project include earlier identification of warning signs of mental illnesses in young adults and improved adherence to treatment.

- THE FOUNDATIONS *TYPICAL OR TROUBLED?*[™] (ToT) program inspired participation from more than 4,000 teachers and other school personnel across the nation. The school mental health education program was implemented in 73 high schools in 17 states through a partnership with the American School Counselors Association, the School Social Work Association of America and Mental Health America.

- THE APF HOSTED ITS FIRST *CONVERSATIONS* at an IPS event in New Orleans, with several New Orleans musicians sharing their music and stories of recovery after Hurricane Katrina devastated the city. In addition, the foundation hosted a fundraising program, "A Night for New Orleans" that generated thousands of dollars in support of the foundation and community organizations that provided mental health services and outreach in New Orleans.