

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

October 2024

Content compiled by Department of Psychiatry DEI Leaders: Drs. Cavazos and Navsaria and Kavya Singh

Message from the Department Head, Eric Lenze, MD

During Grand Rounds this week, I discussed mental illness and premature aging and mortality. Mental health equity is an important issue that must be addressed. As leaders in the field, we advocate for policies that ensure equitable access to care, conduct research to understand causes of premature aging/early mortality, provide high-quality clinical care, and educate the next generation of mental health clinicians and scientists. Thanks for your commitment to excellence and making a positive impact.

Mental Health Equity: Mental Health Disparities with Neha Navsaria, PhD

Mental health disparities are the data that outline discrepancies in mental health, mental health services and mental health determinants most often based on race, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity ([Barksdale et al, 2022](#); [American Psychiatric Association](#); [American Psychological Association](#)). For example, as Dr. Lenze identified above and presented in his grand rounds last week, taking a closer look at the specific mental health disparities that occur in the premature aging/early mortality population is an important piece in moving mental health equity forward and guiding a framework to best address well-being for this population. [Barksdale et al. \(2022\)](#) highlight the importance of research that understands the complex mechanisms of disparities and how to translate this understanding into effective intervention development that advances mental health equity. They specify 1) the need to build on and adopt multilevel, multidimensional perspectives in research and clinical practice to reduce mental health disparities and 2) the examination of intersectionality and structural racism within socially and developmentally salient contexts and how these determinants exacerbate mental health and health care disparities. Achieving mental health equity is not possible without addressing disparities in mental health care. Next month we will share examples of innovative work in mental health disparities.

DEI 1.0-4.0 Training

Sign up for DEI 1.0-4.0 training with the Office of DEI [here](#). Taking these courses (Awareness, Understanding, Commitment, and Action) will allow you to continue your training in our Understanding Systemic Racism cohorts, a deeper dive and additional topics to the department-wide training we provided in January.

Flu Shots

As a reminder, all WUSM faculty, staff, and students are required to receive their flu shot and submit documentation on Workday by Monday November 18, 2024 at 5 PM. More info [here](#).

Unity in Wellness with Jennifer Holzhauer, MSW, LCSW

Letting Go with Compassion and Cultural Awareness: As autumn prompts reflection on letting go, mindfully consider biases or assumptions to release. Reflect on how these beliefs may have been shaped, and how letting them go can open space for more inclusive perspectives. Practicing this helps create a foundation for personal growth in empathy and inclusivity. Connecting our autumn mindfulness practices with a DEI lens brings depth to the season's themes, honoring both personal well-being and collective cultural awareness.

DEI Speaker Sessions

Join our department's DEI team in our next DEI Speaker Session October 31, 2024, at 11:00 AM with Dr. Seanna Leath, Washington University in St. Louis Assistant Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences, on "Counterspaces, Identity Development, and Wellbeing among Black Youth." Register for Dr. Leath's session [here](#). Find a flyer attached. Review Dr. Leath's biography and related research [here](#). If you have any questions you would like to submit to be answered after the session, please send them to Kavya Singh (kavyas@wustl.edu).

Election Day 2024

Tuesday November 5, 2024 is Election Day. All employees must be given the opportunity to vote if they choose to. View [Vote Outreach](#) for your registration and polling information.

Building Connections: Engaging Former Residents and Fellows in DEI Work

Dr. Gemma Espejo, graduate from WUSM psychiatry residency and current assistant professor and Vice Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at UCI, invited Dr. Navsaria to present at their DEI Grand Rounds at the University of California, Irvine Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior. The two connected and discussed Dr. Espejo's time in St. Louis as well as her current role at UCI. Dr. Espejo looks fondly back at her days in training in St. Louis. As Chief Resident (2017-2018), she started a DEI committee made of faculty and trainees, helped start a Woman's Advocacy and Mentorship Group as well as a monthly medical conference with a cultural psychiatry/social determinants of health, and mental health equity/access lens. During her time at UCI, she has also made efforts to promote equity in the residency application review process. We're excited to continue to connect with former residents and fellows and learn more about any work in DEI they have done.

Public Health at WashU Annual Conference

Our Psychiatry DEI Leaders had the opportunity to present “Championing Inclusion: DEI Initiatives in the WUSM Department of Psychiatry” at the 2024 Public Health at WashU Annual Conference. Find our poster attached to see a summary of all of our current initiatives. You can also find information on these initiatives on our website.

Disability as the Next Step in DEI Explored at Annual Meeting

Looking back at the 2024 APA Annual Meeting in New York, we found this Psychiatric Times article highlighting a talk given by one of our residents, PGY4 Jessica Williams. In the session, she shared insights into the care of our patients with disabilities and also discussed a case report (now accepted to the next issue of AJP-RJ!) of a Deaf refugee that she and Dr. Jarvis treated on the inpatient unit. Further, she also showcased how the growing prevalence of physicians with disabilities is enhancing culturally competent patient care. She has submitted an abstract for another session at APAAM25 that will examine how disability is discussed in medical education and share opportunities for enhancing such a curriculum. We are in great hopes that she will get the chance to present on this important topic again at the annual meeting in Los Angeles! Read more about the Dr. Williams’ time at the APA Annual Meeting [here](#).

Disability, Equity, and Mental Health Research Webinar Series
From 2024-2025, the National Institute of Mental Health's (NIMH) *Office for Disparities Research and Workforce Diversity* is hosting a Disability, Equity, and Mental Health Research Webinar Series, which focuses on exploring the health disparities experienced by people with disability. These include disparities in mental health outcomes, which can be further compounded for those with intersecting identities. This webinar series brings together researchers, advocates, and people with lived experience to discuss the intersection of disability, mental health, and race and ethnicity. Additionally, the series explores the notion of mental health conditions as a disability and considers the viewpoints of those with lived experience.

Helping transgender and nonbinary clients navigate gatekeeping

By Stephanie L. Budge, Joonwoo Lee, Elliot A. Tebbe, and Sergio Domínguez Jr.

This article discusses the increasing challenges faced by healthcare providers delivering gender-affirming care amid politicization and restrictive legislation. It highlights the 2022 World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) guidelines (SOC Version 8), which no longer mandate "letters of readiness" but offer guidance for clinicians when required. The authors propose the "companionship model" to make the referral process more collaborative and affirming, ensuring that transgender and nonbinary clients receive care aligned with informed consent practices. Read more [here](#).

Hope in the Age of Fear Based Politics: Trans Rights with Representative Zooey Zephyr and Journalist Erin Reed

Thursday, November 7, 2024 | 5:30 PM Fireside Chat with Reception immediately following.

Danforth Campus – Hillman Hall, Clark-Fox Forum

Hear from this power couple about what it's like to embrace the same issues from two different perspectives - as a journalist and as a politician. Zooey and Erin will discuss how the fight for LGBTQ rights shows up in elections, laws, and public discourse. Learn how politics affects our personal and interpersonal relationships, and how to find hope and be effective amidst the attacks on our freedoms. Register [here](#).