Monday Memo – November 27, 2017

Professional Development

- Last month, the Department completed a series of three basic research methodology workshops covering topics including Picking a Research Project, Conducting a Literature Review, and Questionnaire Design/Survey Instrument Development. Judy Savageau and Roger Luckmann served as faculty. The sessions were well attended, with over 20 attendees participating across the 3 workshops and an average of 12 attendees at each.

  We are planning a second series of workshops in the spring. Possible topics include Basic Data Analysis, Scientific Writing and the Basics of Publishing, Qualitative Research Methods, and the IRB Process: to IRB or Not to IRB. Stay tuned for notifications to the list serve. Feel free to suggest additional topics that we should include; contact Kate Sullivan at Kate.Sullivan@umassmed.edu.

Professional Service

- Linda Weinreb has been selected to serve on the Social Services Integration Working Group for MassHealth. This Working Group will play a key role by providing advice and input in the implementation of MassHealth’s delivery system reform efforts specific to social services integration.

Presentations

- Bill Foley served as a member of the faculty for the Berkshire Osteopathic Study Group Annual Meeting in Williamstown, Massachusetts. The meeting took place November 10-13 at the Williams Inn. He was part of a panel lecture, discussion, and practical guide on the autonomic nervous system and practical applications to related diseases. This is a yearly graduate level continuing studies in the Biodynamics of Osteopathy course taught by a group of faculty all with over 15+ years of extensive study.

- At the recent Family Medicine Education Consortium (FMEC) meeting in Cleveland, faculty member Laura Sturgill represented UMass at the IMPLICIT (Interventions to Minimize Preterm and Low birth weight Infants using Continuous quality Improvement Techniques) Network. Laura also presented "Trial and Error: Establishing a CQI process to implement ICC (Interconception Care)", a joint presentation with UPMC St. Margaret in Pittsburgh and MAHEC in Asheville NC.
• Hugh Silk gave All Specialty Grand Rounds at Health Alliance Hospital in Leominster on November 7 on the topic of “A Practical Approach to Oral Health Across the Life Cycle.”

Medical Student Education

• Jennifer Reidy and Ron Adler presented on team-based care during the Primary Care Optional Enrichment Elective on Nov.16th.

Media

• Paula Gardiner’s work on integrative group visits is highlighted in the blog The Integrative Practitioner: Integrative group visits emerge as key tool in community healthcare

Chairs’ Corner: If you find yourself confused about your approach to hypertension, you’re in good company. Earlier this month, the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology and nine other organizations unveiled a new hypertension guideline that lowered the threshold for the diagnosis of hypertension, estimating that it would increase the percentage of the US population with hypertension from 32% to 46%. The recommendation, based on a review of the literature by a panel of 21 experts, is published in the American Heart Association journal Hypertension and in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

A press release from the AHA pointed out that “the new guidelines are the successor to the Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (JNC7), issued in 2003 and overseen by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).” It’s curious that they didn’t even acknowledge the existence of the 2013 JNC8, which was completed outside the oversight from NHLBI. JNC8 recommended higher thresholds for diagnosing and managing hypertension.

Reaction to the new guidelines has varied, including some early skepticism (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/15/opinion/blood-pressure-guidelines.html). There’s bound to be more commentary over the next several weeks and months (see “AAFP to Review AHA/ACC Redefinition of High Blood Pressure: Academy Continues to Endorse JNC8 Hypertension Guideline” at http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20171115ahaacchbguideline.html?cmpid=em_AP_20170719). Stay tuned!

WELLNESS MOMENTS FOR THE MONDAY MEMO
I’m reading *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being* by Martin Seligman, who is the founder and arguably the nation’s leading expert on positive psychology. The central tenet of the book is that well-being has five elements: positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment (PERMA). It seems pretty obvious that the more PERMA one has in his/her life, a greater sense of well-being will follow. What is not so obvious, however, is that some pretty simple and specific exercises can and do measurably increase these elements in your life and thus your well-being. Seligman cautions against trying to identify and fortify your gaps, but rather embraces an entirely strength based approach. Try this brief signature strengths survey (https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/brief-strengths-test) and then commit to spending a little bit of time using your strengths more frequently and in new ways, either at work or home. For example, if one of your signature strengths is love of learning, you could set aside a couple hours a month to take a class or explore a new topic. If, however, kindness and generosity are among your top strengths, setting aside time each month to volunteer in some capacity might help you flourish. The idea is to first discover and then play to your strengths. Another simple (but not necessarily easy) technique is a gratitude exercise called “three good things.” For a week, every evening before bed, write down three things that went well and why they went well. Or try this at work … for example, start the morning huddle asking the group to identify three things that went well yesterday and why they went well. See how it feels after a week. Gratitude, like kindness, is contagious. True, none of these exercises will help with PESD (Post-EPIC Stress Disorder), but where we place our attention matters. Time is a precious, non-renewable resource; spend it wisely and intentionally.

For those of you who enjoy meditation, here is an audio only 6-minute meditation: https://www.dropbox.com/s/3dqzeh84vib4vdx/6%20min%20Mindfullness%20Practice%20Aug17.mp3?dl=0