

PSYCHIATRIST

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Newsletter of the Southern California Psychiatric Society

President's Column

Summer Update

Larry Lawrence, M.D.



Welcome to our summer newsletter. I hope everyone is enjoying their vacations and will return refreshed and relaxed. A couple of reminders about upcoming events. The 25th Annual California Psychiatric Association Premier Conference will convene in Dana Point September 28-30. Program to include meet and greet plus movie and discussion on Friday. Saturday will include fun run, coursework, updates on MOC, DSM-5, and legal developments as well as Legislative Luncheon. I hope to see many of you there. We will have Dr. John Oldham discussing the DSM-5 and personality disorders. It promises to be enjoyable and educational, and collegial. Also upcoming is the APA Institute for Psychiatric Services meeting in NYC. This will occur October 4-7, 2012. SCPS will present our annual Psychopharmacology Conference during the winter, on Saturday, January 26, 2013.

We had an opportunity to meet and dine with a number of NAMI members in June, to discuss developments of mutual interest. Issues related to Laura's Law were discussed at some length and compared to Kendra's Law in New York. Aspects of the law and financial restrictions and legal threats have significantly limited its implementation. There continue to be a number of people opposed to forced care of any kind. This continues a predicament where the people most likely to benefit are often least likely to realize their need for care. Discussion of implementation of Laura's Law in Nevada County and LA county were contrasted. This led to discussion of the reports of improved outcomes in patients in Nevada County covered by Laura's Law. This also transitioned into a review of the Lanterman Petris Short Act, the portion of the California Welfare and Institutions Code involving involuntary commitment to psychiatric hospitals in California. The LPS Reform Task Force II has reviewed the LPS code, now 45 years old, and made a number of recommendations to create an updated version. Changes will benefit persons with mental illness, and address trans-institutionalization, the shift of mentally ill from mental health facilities to mental health services in the jail and prison system. The task force report uses the lessons learned in these 45 years to make very specific fourteen recommendations on how to proceed. Further talk about the Prop 63, MHSA funding, budget issues in the state and potential impact in the coming year were addressed. I found this meeting to be quite thought provoking and appreciate the input and insights shared.

It appears to me that as an organization and as a profession we are entering very challenging times. Some programs are very actively pursuing aspects of the Affordable Care Act and are gearing up to be aligned with the directives of that law. For mental health, as noted by APA president, Dilip Jeste, there may be significant advantages. Issues of scope of practice will continue to arise, and the persons providing mental health care may change. We, as psychiatrists have much to contribute and need to be at the table for issues like Medical Homes, mental health

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care in the schools, maintenance of licensure, maintenance of certification, and access to care. We ask for your input on these issues, as they will impact our practice of psychiatry in the foreseeable future. We will continue to advocate for our patients, for affordable and accessible care, and to support our colleagues in educational and professional growth. We have always found our membership to be generous with their expertise and insights. Remember that our committees, and task forces are volunteers, and could always use members who have areas of special interest. Our best innovations often come from the people we know and work with daily. Have a healthy and happy summer, and see you at Dana Point.

Regards,
Larry Lawrence, M.D.

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Dates to Remember:

CPA Annual Meeting:
Evolution of Psychiatry: Expanding Our Knowledge
September 28-30, 2012

Institute on Psychiatric Services
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Psychopharmacology Update 24
January 26, 2013

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Counterpunching

by: Walter T. Haessler, M.D.

My father graduated from Stevens Institute of Technology as a mechanical engineer in 1929, right into the Great Depression. We lived in northern New Jersey, not far away, and I remember tagging along when he went back to reunions.

I also remember that Stevens had a summer vocational counseling program for high school students. It involved vocational interest testing, as well as what I now recognize as assessments of intellectual functioning and personality. I then was interviewed by a psychologist, who next met separately with my parents, and finally with all three of us. Quite a deal for \$50, even in 1957.

Afterward, I asked my parents what the psychologist said about me that she hadn't said at the joint meeting. My mother seemed to have a knowing look in replying, "He parries well."

Nailed me. Absolutely nailed me.

We psychiatrists, of all people, know that personality traits are enduring, essentially life-long, and I know myself to be a counterpuncher. And, not surprisingly, that seems to be the approach I take to my late-blooming writing career.

From the time I first gave politics serious consideration, I have leaned toward the right end of the American political spectrum, especially regarding fiscal policy and the importance of limiting the power and scope of government. This libertarian/conservative conviction has been expressed, in counterpunching style, in Southern California Psychiatrist articles in 2005 and 2011.

My Letter to the Editor of *Psychiatric News* earlier this year was a counterpunch (see below). It seemed to me that some specifics of the lead news article of the January 20, 2012 issue ("Psychiatrists Occupy Place In Protest Movement") <http://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/newsArticle.aspx?articleid=334875>, and its overall tone, came off as left-leaning, and critical of our country for doing too little for the poor and the mentally ill. In a news article, that's a problem. Did the editors miss it, or choose to ignore it? Which is worse?

Don't get me wrong. We psychiatrists want a nice big slice of the government pie, to properly care for our neediest patients, and I support our lobbying efforts. By the way, I consider us rather classy in that regard. For example, it seemed to me that the unionized teachers who occupied the Wisconsin Statehouse were mainly interested in their pay and benefits. On the other hand, I believe that we psychiatrists, in seeking increased public funding, keep our patients' interests first and foremost.

But the government has only so much money. In fact, we are the world's greatest debtor. What kind of a fix will we be in when interest rates rise, as they inevitably will, and are applied to our immense and growing debt? What will happen when a majority of Americans are dependent on government, and vote for the politicians who promise to make them the most comfortable in their dependency? Will that be how democracy ends? But I digress.

I spoke with the Psychiatric News Executive Editor on February 9, and my letter was received by her on March 1. There were exchanges of messages, and then a second phone conversation on June 25. Without going into detail, here's how things stood at that point: the Editor in Chief had not yet said whether or not he would print my letter; and I should feel free to submit it for publication elsewhere. I think, at this late date, the reasonable man would take that as a "no."

I ask members to first read the article in question, easy to find on the APA website, then my letter. Let me know if you think I'm making too much of this. Keep me honest. I'd also like to hear from political kindred spirits in our organization. There must be at least a few of us.

Here is my letter, as submitted to Psychiatric News:

Re: Letter to the Editor

I recall reading, regarding salesmanship, that it is emotion that leads to action. I believe that. A man wants to lose weight, but not until experiencing fear (after a talk with his doctor), love (for the grandson who could grow up without him), or hate (for the fat man in the mirror), will he act.

The emotion leading to my first submission to Psychiatric News is annoyance. The January 20, 2012 cover article seems to not just report on the involvement of three psychiatrists in the Occupy movement, but to take a stand with the protesters. Thus, it seems that the editors either missed it, or chose to engage in front-page editorializing.

The writer refers to a psychiatrist taking part in a speak-out, "to explain the failure of the U.S. health care system to care for the poor and mentally ill individuals." If I'm the editor, it reads, "to explain his position that the U.S. health care system has failed to care for the poor and mentally ill individuals."

He goes on to state that, "psychiatrists...have helped support participants in the Occupy Wall Street Movement's ongoing protest against entrenched economic and political power." (Quick...name a country where economic and political power is less entrenched.) He states, further, that speakers, "elaborated on the health system's shortcomings," and spoke on, "the necessity for a single-payer program."

The above are the writer's words. He is not quoting anyone. When he does quote individual psychiatrists, we read things like, "(The Occupy encampments are) an incredibly organized movement," and, "the wealthy...run society (in a) deeply unfair way (leading to victimization)." I'm still working on "incredibly organized." Maybe he meant "organized in an incredible fashion."

Back to emotion leads to action. I well remember my annoyance at managed care's takeover of psychiatric practice, which, in 1993, led to my action of leaving private practice and accepting locum tenens assignments.

I recall being a bit of an agitator on the road, always in the direction of advocating for patients, and not always appreciated by management for my efforts. I argued for things like expanded formularies, more face-to-face time with patients, and better jail conditions.

I get it, I really do, that we have a moral responsibility to advocate for our patients. As a fiscal conservative, however, I also get it that we are in a long, long line with other claimants for governmental largess, whose claims are as legitimate to them as are ours to us.

And the government has only so much money. Yes, it can tax more, borrow more, and print more, but there is a down side to each of these operations. We are seeing what happens when European entitlement societies disentitle their citizens after, in Margaret Thatcher's words, running out of other people's money.

More to the point: Don't members, left or right, agree that political rhetoric, left or right, unless scrupulously quoted and attributed, has no place in a news article on the front page of our publication?

*Sincerely,
Walter T. Haessler, M.D.*

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Joan Asarnow, Ph.D. addressing the attendees at the joint San Fernando Valley Region and So. CA Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry meeting.



Timothy Fong, M.D. addressing the attendees at the joint San Fernando Valley Region and So. CA Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry meeting.



Steve Soldinger, M.D., getting ready to Chair the joint SCPS/NAMI Dinner Meeting.



An agenda set by questions from the floor led to interesting discussion at the joint SCPS/NAMI Dinner Meeting.



SCPS provided a \$500 grant to the USC Psychiatry Residency Program. The residents used the grant to help offset the cost of their Happy Hour to Welcome the New Psychiatry Residents. (They DO look happy!)

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Save the Date!

**SCPS' Premiere
Psychopharmacology Update 24
Saturday, January 26, 2013**

Council Highlights

June 14, 2012

Sophie Duriez, M.D., *Treasurer*



Dr. Lawrence called the meeting to order. A motion was made to accept the May minutes. All voted in favor, and none opposed. Dr. Lawrence welcomed the Council's members and each member present made a brief introduction by stating their name and Council's position.

Dr. Lawrence announced the President's Report by asking Dr. Schaepper for an update of Women's Tea. Dr. Salman, by calling in, reported the success and good attendance of the last Women's Tea meeting hosted at the home of Dr. Doryann Lebe with about thirty people present. Dr. Salman expressed her wish for the SCPS to continue supporting the Women's Committee due to the success of the Women's High Tea meetings. A motion was made to accept the SCPS funding support of the Women's Tea events for a budget of \$1500 for two teas with the caveat that the committee should seek additional funding through other sources and report back to Council after the next tea. All voted in favor, and none opposed. Other future venues will be explored to support the Women's Tea. Dr. Salman thanked everybody and ended her call.

Mindi Thelen gave a report website/IT /Communications: there are now 14 pages on the website. The construction of the website is steadily progressing and improving.

Dr. Burchuk gave his report regarding the COI Committee update. Dr. Shaner reminded Council that the By-laws Committee found that the proposed COI policy was in compliance with the SCPS Bylaws. Dr. Soldinger made a motion to approve the proposed COI changes. A motion was voted: Two opposed. Ms. Thelen reported that SCPS received a list from the Medical Board of California of physicians licensed in the SCPS' jurisdiction who have identified themselves as psychiatrists. This summer the recruitment letter that was written by Dr. Etekal will be sent to all non-members along with a membership brochure.

Dr Lawrence announced the next Council meeting on September 13, 2012.

The APA competitive grant is due on July 1st. Dr. Schaepper mentioned that Dr. Gabriella Beaubrun is an SCPS member on the APA Membership Committee and has offered to help write the grant request. Ms. Thelen was asked to contact Dr. Beaubrun about helping write the request.

Committee chairs: Dr Lawrence ran through the list of existing committee chairs with special notation of those who have exceeded their term of 8 years. Dr. Lawrence will be reappointing some chairs and working on replacing those chairs whose terms have expired.

Dr. Soldinger gave his report of the NAMI dinner. An agenda was created from questions from the floor. Dr. Soldinger spoke about the LPS charts, compared to the medical model. He referred to the website:

<http://www.lasuperiorcourt.org/mentalhealth/pdf/lps-holds-chart.pdf>

Dan Willick gave a legislative report. Dan Willick commented on proposed legislation prohibiting reparative therapy.

Dr. Forgey presented the May financials & cash on hand. Motion to accept treasurer's report was proposed and voted. All in favor, none opposed.

Member committee report was given by Dr. Dr Soldinger, current membership includes 951 members. Dr Sol-

dingers motion to accept new members nomination was proposed and voted. All in favor, none opposed.

Program Committee report Dr. Gales announced that the committee has begun work on the 2013 Psychopharmacology Update.

The New Business was addressed by Mindi Thelen, she asked about deciding of the dates for the 2013 Installation and Awards Ceremony so that we could make sure that Kitty Dukakis would be available. Saturday 4/27/13 and 5/4/13 will be offered as possible dates. On another topic, Dr. Gales asked : Do we have a position on EMR? Dan Willick stated his belief that any physician/psychiatrist who does not have only cash-only patients will need EMR very soon. Always per Dan Willick, even private practice psychiatrists solely contracted with private health care insurances companies, not accepting government programs, will eventually be forced in the near future to implement EMR settings as a demand of their contracted private insurances. A discussion went on the confidentiality of psychotherapy notes versus psychiatric medication management notes. So far, only psychotherapy notes receive the highest level of confidentiality under HIPAA.

There was no Old Business and Dr. Lawrence adjourned the June 2012 Council Meeting.

Please note there is no August issue of
The Southern California PSYCHIATRIST

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