



SCPS Newsletter - SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIST

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President's Column: The Must-Read Advocacy Issue: Thank You For Supporting Psychiatry. This Advocacy Work Wouldn't Be Possible Without You.

by Galya Rees, MD

Dear SCPS Members,

The April issue of our newsletter is dedicated to psychiatric advocacy in all its forms—the big legislative wins, the frustrating battles, the short- and long-term investments, and the many ways we can all get involved. Whether it's integrating advocacy into residency training, strengthening our voice at the APA national level, or navigating the complexities of political action committees, advocacy is at the heart of what we do at SCPS. It's how we protect our patients, support our profession, and push for policies that work for, not against, those we care for.

SCPS advocacy is powered by dedicated member volunteers who give countless hours of their time. However, to be truly effective, we also rely on professional lobbyists (SYASL) and administrative support—making advocacy the largest expense in our budget. This is a worthwhile investment because it directly benefits our profession and our patients.

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Welcome to the April 2025 SCPS Psychiatric Advocacy Edition

*by Roderick Shaner, MD, Emily T. Wood, MD, and
Laura Halpin, MD*

When the three of us inaugurated the first Advocacy Edition of the SCPS Psychiatrist last April, it was just an experiment. It increased membership awareness of SCPS advocacy, stirred up some controversies, and garnered lots of member clicks! So, it is our great pleasure to welcome you to the second Advocacy Edition. Our goals remain the same.

1. To showcase the activity that takes up the biggest chunk of the SCPS budget and provides direct benefits to our profession and our patients.
2. To recognize the advocacy contributions of SCPS members, and APA members in our fellow Area 6 (California) DBs who join us in CSAP to help change California regulations that harm our patient care and to stop proposed legislation that is clinically unsound.
3. To inspire or goad you to weigh in on critical advocacy issues and become further involved in crafting policies and regulations that affect our work. Each of us -every member of SCPS—has unique and critical expertise to contribute.
4. To highlight the value of shaping our own advocacy rather than “giving input” to others.

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Psychiatrists Made California Laws Better Last Year - And Aren't Going to Stop!

by CSAP GAC, Board, and Paul Yoder

In 2024, a raft of new bills, many sponsored or supported by CSAP, extended recent historic breakthroughs in mental health law. Here are six of those bills that are immediately relevant to our practices.

[SB 42 \(Umbertg\)](#) Stops attempts by local CARE Court regulations to improperly limit families and clinical staff from the CARE Court Process through various means, including limiting communication.

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How Individual Psychiatrists Are in Fact Driving Needed Change

by Paul Yoder

Hello again everyone! I'm Paul Yoder, the "Y" in SYASL, and the guy who writes that weekly email blast that you get about legislative activity in Sacramento. I'm happy to have the opportunity again in the annual SCPS Psychiatrist advocacy issue to update you all on the question that was posed last year: "What can I—as just one busy psychiatrist—do to help drive legislative change?" Here's an example from the California legislative session that just ended.

A CASE IN POINT: *Making Riese hearing procedures less dangerous*

If you've worked in psychiatric inpatient services, you know that Riese hearings that are meant to protect patients' rights too often unnecessarily interrupt medical treatment and endanger patient care. One SCPS psychiatrist, Erick Cheung, after conferring with colleagues, suggested changes to Riese hearing law in California to mitigate this unintended consequence. The observation was this: that unfortunately from time to time, court calendars were such that individuals transitioned from one involuntary detention order to another, were going several days without medications due to a "gap" in legal proceedings.

You are invited to the SCPS annual

Installation & Awards Ceremony

Saturday, May 3rd, 2025 2:30pm – 5:30pm

The New Center for Psychoanalysis
2014 Sawtelle Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025

RSVP: socalpsychiatric@gmail.com



Advocacy Training Psychiatric Resident

Education: *It's an ACGME requirement!*

by Manal Khan, MD

The American College of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) requires that residents graduating from psychiatry residency programs demonstrate competence in advocating for quality patient care and optimal patient care systems, competence in advocating for the promotion of mental health and prevention of mental health disorders and learn to advocate for patients within the healthcare system to achieve care goals. Additionally, psychiatry residency programs aspire to train residents and fellows who respect and respond to the mental health needs of diverse patient populations, understand and address social and structural determinants of health, and attend to the needs of their local communities.

Psychiatric organizations such as the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and its district branches including Southern California Psychiatric Society (SCPS) provide residents and fellows with opportunities to learn about and practice advocacy. Through specialized fellowships, council and committee participation, and resident-fellow member representation, trainees can collaborate with like-minded colleagues on issues of importance to them. Organized psychiatry can play a critical role in shaping policies, promoting mental health, and supporting psychiatrists in their practice. As the next generation of psychiatrists, trainees can utilize these existing structures to advocate for their patients and communities.

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The CSAP Secret Sauce Recipe

by Roderick Shaner, MD

The California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP) celebrates its fifth anniversary this year. It restored member-directed legislative advocacy for California APA members. It quickly ascended to become a formidable voice for psychiatry in state politics, advocating for essential mental health legislation annually and securing notable victories for both patients and the profession. Since 2022, the alliance has enjoyed the united support of all five California district branches and the APA.

We must not take our success for granted. History teaches us the pitfalls of complacency in member-driven political action in California and the difficulty of uniting five independent DBs under a single—and costly—umbrella. Determining what makes CSAP effective is crucial for its preservation.

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APA National Advocacy - Just When We Need It the Most

by Rachel Johnston

During this period of critical new national policy proposals related to healthcare, APA needs your engagement and help now more than ever. Here is why and how.

Why:

Advocacy has the power to shape decisions on a national and state level. There have been many changes introduced by the new Administration and Congress regarding mental health and substance use services, making it critical that APA members take action. APA staff are working very closely with the APA Board of Trustees to ensure that APA's policies are protected, and that the voice of psychiatry is heard. We are committed to advocating for policies that protect and advance the practice of psychiatry and the patients you serve. Core to this is our work to promote evidence-based policies to shape the future of mental health care.

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CSAP PAC: Powerful and Transparent

by Laura Halpin

The California State Association of Psychiatrists, your state-wide advocacy organization, has formed a political action committee (PAC). As your PAC representative from SCPS, I hope to demonstrate how PAC contributions are an important, transparent way to influence the political process – and not a seedy way to pass unmarked bills under the table to crooked politicians! And, I will provide an update on our recent actions.

While money is NOT the main way that we, as psychiatrists, can or should influence policy, it's undeniably part of the political process that shouldn't be overlooked. PACs are highly regulated with the goal of transparent advocacy, not mechanisms for unethical financial influence. PACs allow professionals to pool resources and amplify their collective voice in policy discussions that directly impact patient care, public health, and the future of our profession. By supporting candidates and legislation that align with evidence-based medicine and ethical healthcare policies, PACs help ensure that lawmakers understand the complexities of mental health care and the broader medical field. Importantly, PAC contributions are transparent, regulated, and serve to educate policymakers rather than buy influence. Without organized advocacy efforts like the CSAP PACs, the voices of psychiatrists risk being drowned out by competing interests that may not prioritize patient well-being or our profession. Contributing to a PAC, financially and otherwise, when done intentionally and transparently, can really make a difference.

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Countering Psychiatric Group Think - It's critical (and fun, sort of...)

by Joseph Vlaskovits, MD

“Diversity and independence are important because the best collective decisions are the product of disagreement and contest, not consensus or compromise.” – James Surowiecki.

As physicians, we are taught that the best way to resolve conflict among ourselves is to come to a consensus for the patient's needs. As psychiatrists, this is naturally amplified by our focus on the patient's subjective state. While these are

essential to ensuring our good clinical care, I would respectfully submit that these approaches may sometimes stand in the way of effective advocacy.

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Political Action Alerts as Necessary Nuisances: How to shoot a quick and effective email to your representative

by Emily T. Wood, MD, PhD

As long as the United States remains a representative democracy, your voice is a powerful tool. Contacting your elected officials, especially your representatives in Congress, is crucial for influencing policy and ensuring your concerns are heard. This is particularly true if you live in a potential **swing-district**.

Why swing districts matter:

Districts where election results were close in 2024 and are expected to be close again in 2026, hold significant sway. Currently, 8 of the 10 [most competitive congressional districts](#) for 2026 are in California and four of those districts have areas within SCPS. These four districts are currently represented by George Whitesides (D, Dist 27, northern Los Angeles County), Ken Calvert (R, Dist 41, parts of Riverside County), Young Kim (R, Dist 40, parts of Orange/Riverside/San Bernardino counties), and Derek Tran (D, Dist 45, parts of Los Angeles and Orange counties). These representatives, who faced tough re-election races, are more likely to be responsive to their constituents' concerns. In particular, in our current slight Republican-majority US House of Representatives, the swingable Republican votes can be decisive, potentially making outreach to Calvert and Kim even more impactful. (I'm talking to you Inland Empire!)

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The Necessity of Preserving a Diverse Workforce: Observations from The Intersection of DEI and Psychiatry SCPS Conference

by Cathy Banh, MD and Austin Nguy, MD



In our discussion for the SCPS virtual event in February entitled *The Intersection of DEI and Psychiatry*, we posed the following question to the SCPS members: ***What are diverse, equitable, and inclusive recruitment strategies?***

We based our discussion on the premise psychiatry's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) must go beyond preservation, especially during times when the values of DEI are attacked.

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The Curious Case of Advocacy in Private Psychiatry

by Matthew Goldenberg, DO

Last month I wrote about [the importance of APA developing a Private Practice Component](#). While many APA components currently touch on private practice issues, none focuses on the practice of medicine, the legal, scope and other issues that directly impact psychiatrists in private practice.

An important aspect of the new APA Council on Private Practice will be to identify those members who are in private practice to coordinate their efforts and experiences to shape APA positions and advocacy efforts. For those in private practice, this will become a valuable member benefit. In addition, this renewed focus on private practice may well help to persuade non-members to join APA.

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Your Patients' Medications - The Government Wants a Say

by Emily T. Wood, MD, PhD

The national stimulant medication shortage that started in Fall 2022 continues to ravage pharmacies and restrict appropriate treatment to patients across the SCPS region. The reasons behind the shortage are quite complex. Without getting too deep in the weeds, what we thought was related to one Adderall manufacturing plant going unexpectedly offline in October 2022, has turned into the DEA recently publicly declaring that prescription stimulants are the next opioid crisis and that they

are taking all necessary measures to limit diversion. This comparison to opioids is not founded in the clinical data or neuroscience of these medications and the conditions they treat. This stance by the DEA may be contributing to delays, leading to pharmacies developing policies limiting access to medications to prevent flagging the DEA Suspicious Orders Reporting System, and inadequate treatment for individuals with ADHD. The Stimulant Shortage Task Force at SCPS will continue to work to improve access to the first-line treatment for individuals with ADHD.



Your Party in Peril? - The Importance of the DMHC Help Line

by Robert Burchuk, MD

Behavioral health parity in insurance coverage is intrinsically linked to the availability of treatment services for the vast majority of the US population.

Last year, we wrote about the imminent final CA regulations guiding the implementation of 2020's CA SB 855, especially requirements for the provision of out of network services when an in-network provider is unavailable, and for utilization management based on independent, non-profit medical necessity criteria. It's fair to say health plans have not rushed to be first in class when it comes to behavioral health and compliance with the new regulations is lagging.

This article focuses on proposed SB 363 as the next incremental improvement.

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APA Presentations with Relevance to the Wildfires and Other Disasters

Disasters and Their Consequences – Tuesday, May 20, 3:45 pm – 5:15 pm

Session description: Mental health consequences of climate-induced disasters, of war, famine, and political displacement result in traumatized communities, families, and individuals. Compounded by a lack of mental health professionals, a focus on short-term emergency aid instead of long-term prevention,

and political posturing, mental health suffers from inadequate attention after cataclysmic events. This panel of international experts in trauma, disaster relief, and refugees offers lessons from war-torn Ukraine, climate-ravaged Greece, and the US to underscore programs and strategies that can alleviate some of the more devastating mental health effects of disaster. From mainstream trauma-informed care and psychological first aid, to innovative programs that train and prepare lay communities in disaster relief and crisis support, speakers will present the empirical literature, their own research, and the more powerful narratives from their work.

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Welcome New SCPS Members!

Audrey Chen, MD – Resident-Fellow Member

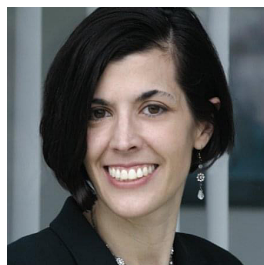
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A Lawyer Whose Struggle With Psychosis Captivated WSJ Readers Returns Home

SCPS Council Member, **Timothy Pylko, MD**, appeared in a story in the Wall Street Journal on March 16, 2025

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February Council Highlights *by Gillian Friedman, MD*

Council Highlights
February 13, 2025
Zoom Meeting 7-9 pm

- I. CALL TO ORDER – 7:02 Dr. Rees
- II. Check-In – fires, Federal Gov't Executive Orders, Etc.
- III. December Council Minutes approved with no amendments/corrections
- IV. Committee Reports

A. Diversity and Culture.

Busy for February – special edition of the newsletter dedicated to DEI. Upcoming Black History Month event Mon Feb 24th 7-8:30, online– panel of speakers, invitation of participants to share. 1) Importance of maintaining diverse workforce, 2) Role of organized psychiatry in times of polarization.

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