



SCPS Newsletter - SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIST

Volume 73, Number 11 - August 2025

<https://www.socalpsych.org/southern-california-psychiatrist-august-2025/>



President's Column: A Call to Action

by Patrick Kelly, MD

For many of us, summer can be a time of rest and reflection, as schools empty and businesses slow their pace. We take time off to spend with loved ones or pursue activities outside of work, giving us a chance to recharge and return to fall renewed and reinvigorated.

However, summer is not always a time of inactivity—far from it. For some, it can be a flurry of movement. In medicine generally, summer is a time of change. Residents graduate from training, while new interns hear themselves called “doctor” for the first time. Training directors begin the process of welcoming new future colleagues into the field, and surgeons perform their very first operations (hence the tongue-in-cheek saying among physicians: “never have surgery in July”).

This summer in particular has seen significant legislative activity. On a positive note, the US House of Representatives passed the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act of 2025 (H.R. 2483). This bipartisan bill aims to reauthorize and expand funding for substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.

On the other hand, the House and Senate passed H.R. 1, a highly impactful and controversial measure that will, among other things, drastically reduce access to essential healthcare resources for 3.4 million Californians, almost 1 million of whom are located in Los Angeles County.

[Read More](#)

DISCOUNTS UP TO 60% FOR
PART-TIME PSYCHIATRISTS

[LEARN MORE >](#)



The Dangers of Legislating Medical Guidelines: Why Clinical Practice Should Remain in Clinical Hands

by Emily Wood, MD, PhD

This year, CSAP co-sponsored bill SB 331 ([SB 331 Substance Abuse – AMENDED, 2025](#)) with Senator Caroline Menjivar (SD 20, San Fernando Valley & Burbank) to make several procedural and definitional changes to LPS law and the CARE Act with the goal of improving access to care for individuals with mental illness. For now, the bill has been put on the back-burner of the 2-year legislative cycle to be discussed again in 2026.

Opposition to the bill focused on adding this line to LPS code: ““Mental health disorder” means a condition outlined in the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.” Their argument is that the DSM is too broad and includes diagnoses such as “caffeine use disorder, gender dysphoria, and restless leg syndrome.” And, their answer is for the legislature to pick and choose the diagnoses that should be considered under LPS law.

Medicine is a dynamic field where scientific understanding evolves continuously, treatment protocols adapt to new evidence, and clinical judgment must navigate complex individual circumstances. Yet, legislators attempt to codify medical practice through rigid statutory definitions and prescribed protocols. This trend represents a fundamental misunderstanding of how medical knowledge develops and threatens to undermine the very foundations of evidence-based care.

[Read More](#)



The Open Window: Gray Skies on the Horizon

by Reba Bindra, MD

Satori is a term derived from Zen Buddhism and loosely translates as an “awakening,” “understanding,” or “comprehension.” It can be a profound shift in perception that transcends ordinary thought. A moment of clarity where an individual perceives the true nature of reality.

I love being a psychiatrist with my soul and spending the last 2 decades working with the most severely mentally ill has been both fulfilling and harrowing. Day in and day out I am knee deep in the fantastical, paranoid, hallucinogenic, tortured worlds of my patients. I know them as soon as I see them, maybe not their specific story, but certainly their journey.

For many years I managed the disappointment and frustration of a revolving door of “care” of psychiatric inpatient hospitals. I convinced myself that if for just one day (in some cases, one hour) I could provide respite to a patient who was tormented by their paranoia and inescapable voices, that I was “doing something”. Small acts of kindness to ease their mental burden, often as simple as listening and respecting their reality. This served as my anchor, the reason I ultimately found meaning working in a jail setting.

[Read More](#)



California's MIST Reform: A Case Study in Unintended Consequences

by Michael Dodge, MD

The Challenge

The United States faces a “competency services crisis” driven largely by defendants with low-level charges and severe mental illness. In California, Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) cases increased 72% from 1999-2014, creating overwhelming pressure on state hospital systems and extending carceral contact for vulnerable populations.

Legislative Response and Reality

California's ambitious attempt to address this crisis through Senate Bill 317 (2022) offers important lessons for psychiatrists and policy makers nationwide. The bill eliminated competency restoration for most Misdemeanor Incompetent to Stand Trial (MIST) defendants, instead mandating community referrals, Assisted Outpatient Treatment, or charge dismissal. While well-intentioned, this sudden shift created significant challenges:

- Community infrastructure couldn't absorb the increased referrals
- Many MIST defendants were released without treatment linkage
- Public mental health infrastructure continues to fail those with the most severe mental illness

[Read More](#)



Antidepressant Discontinuation: Balancing Evidence, Patient Experience, and Clinical Practice

by Emily Wood, MD, PhD

Recent public discourse around antidepressant discontinuation has brought important questions to the forefront of psychiatric practice. During his confirmation hearing for Secretary of Health and Human Services on January 29, 2025, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. claimed: "I know people, including members of my family, who've had a much worse time getting off of SSRIs than they have getting off of heroin." High-profile media coverage, including multiple pieces in The New York Times about prolonged discontinuation effects, has further amplified patient concerns. As psychiatrists, we have an opportunity—and responsibility—to address these concerns with nuance, empathy, and evidence-based perspective.

[Read More](#)



Welcome New SCPS Members!

Jennifer Siegel, MD – General Member
Lynn Yudofsky, MD – General Member
Ariella Nikou, MD – Resident-Fellow Member

[Read More](#)



April & May Council Highlights by Drs. Gillian Friedman and Alex Lin

President's Report: Dr. Rees

CSAP Letter to California Attorney General RE: SAMSHA



- March 27th HHS announced dramatic restructuring – Administration for Healthy America (AHA) would eliminate SAMSHA
- CSAP drafted letter to CA Attorney General outlining background (such as Congress's legislation mandating SAMSHA) urging CA Attorney General to take appropriate action to preserve SAMSHA. (AG could decide to act now – e.g. CA has already filed lawsuits against Trump admin – or could wait and act in concert with other state attorneys general). Motion passes to have SCPS signature to the CSAP letter to AG.

[Read More](#)



SCPS

Southern California Psychiatric Society

P.O. Box 10023, Palm Desert, CA 92255

SOCALPSYCHIATRIC@GMAIL.COM