



SCPS Newsletter - SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PSYCHIATRIST
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President's Column

by Laura Halpin, MD, PhD

Hi All! This is my first newsletter article as your SCPS President, and I want to start by thanking you for the chance to serve you and our organization. Also, thanks to Dr. Kelly for leading the organization to such a strong place after navigating so many challenges this year. Under your steady guidance and thoughtful, optimistic approach, you have truly made a difference. You encouraged us all to join together and engage with some of the toughest issues that our patients and profession face. Your support of SCPS making clear and courageous statements, whether emphasizing the critical importance of protecting science and truth or raising concerns about figures like RFK Jr. or ICE presence, and harmful immigration enforcement, have shown us the power of speaking out when it matters most. Continuing with our advocacy on federal issues that have the potential to impact the practice of psychiatry, SCPS has authored a statement in response to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) MAHA Action Plan to Curb Psychiatric Overprescribing.

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SCPS Statement in Response to the HHS MAHA Action Plan

The Southern California Psychiatric Society (SCPS), representing more than 800 psychiatrists providing full-spectrum mental health care across Southern California, issues this statement in response to the U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services (HHS) MAHA Action Plan to Curb Psychiatric Overprescribing (May 4, 2026).

SCPS is concerned that this framework risks causing serious harm by presenting the nation's mental health crisis primarily as a problem of psychiatric overprescribing. We support the American Psychiatric Association Statement in response to the HHS action plan ("APA Welcomes National Focus on Mental Health, Urges Evidence-Based Approach and Continued Focus on Access to Care").

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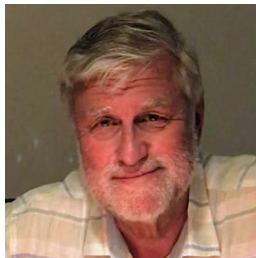
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Therapeutic Considerations in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder *by J. Zeb Little, MD, PhD*

In their 2023 guidelines for the treatment of PTSD, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recommend trauma-focused psychotherapy such as Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), and Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE) over other forms of therapy or pharmacologic interventions. A central element in all these therapies is exposure to the traumatic experience. Decades of research support the finding that psychotherapies utilizing some form of exposure have higher and longer lasting remission rates than other forms of psychotherapy or medication. However, exposure is often described as distressing, can be re-traumatizing, and may lead to poor engagement in treatment and high drop out rates. Approximately half of patients treated with these therapies retain the diagnosis of PTSD after treatment.

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The AI Prescriber Has Arrived (at least in Utah)

by Tim Pylko, MD

Legion Health, a San Francisco-based Y Combinator-backed startup, received approval from the State of Utah to allow its artificial intelligence system to independently renew psychiatric prescriptions — without per-case physician oversight — for stable patients in the state. This is not a pilot of AI-assisted documentation, or of algorithmic decision support for clinicians. This is the first time, anywhere in the world, that an AI system has been granted regulatory clearance to function as the prescribing agent in a psychiatric care pathway.

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Runway to Recovery: Reimagining Medical Equipment Through Fashion Design

by Sanam Ahadi & Vanessa Markgraf, MD, MS

Wallet? Bag? Scrubs? Check. I rushed out the door, barely giving my attire a second thought for my pediatrics rotation. To me, it was just another shirt. Four hours later, as I was visiting Carrie's room, she gently tugged at my sleeve while her mother and the surgical team discussed yet another operation to repair complications from the traumatic bowel injury she sustained in a car accident. At only 11 years old, Carrie had already endured multiple surgeries, prolonged hospitalizations, and an ostomy bag that altered not only her body, but the way she saw herself. Looking up with exhausted yet hopeful eyes, she quietly whispered, "when I get this ostomy bag removed, I hope I can wear a shirt like yours without a big bulge underneath." To Carrie, my shirt represented the possibility of reclaiming the life she once knew — the ability to blend in with other girls her age, to feel comfortable in her own skin, and to exist without being defined by illness. As her medical complications progressed, so too did the loss of control over the few parts of her identity she could still hold onto. Her clothes were never simply fabric; they were self-expression, dignity, and normalcy. Clothing, beyond being a source of aesthetic expression, is a psychological language through which patients communicate individuality, confidence, and culture.

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Photo Gallery (Pt.2) SCPS Installation & Awards Ceremony

Sunday, May 3, 2026 at the New Center for Psychoanalysis in West Los Angeles

Congratulations to all of the awardees! Some are pictured here.

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April Council Highlights

by Roderick Shaner, MD

Meeting Date: April 9, 2026

Next Meeting: May 14, 2026, 7:00 PM (Zoom)

President's Report – Dr. Kelly

- **Clinical Advocacy by SCPS form Improved Clozapine Access:** Council voted to request that APA develop an effective response to ensure that new and better guidelines to replace the now-discontinued FDA REMS requirements. The action was based upon a joint recommendation from the Access to Care and GA committees as presented by Dr. Kelly. Dr. Rees noted that, without new authoritative guidelines, pharmacies and insurance companies have not changed their practices. This situation places ongoing burdens for patients and uncertainty for doctors.

Passed motion: That SCPS request that Access for Care Committee develop an Assembly action paper, hopefully in concert with other district branches, requesting that the APA prioritize advocacy for updated FDA guidelines or the production of new APA guidelines for clozapine monitoring that reflect current evidence-based practices, and then actively promulgate these guidelines.

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