Weaver, Ashtari, and Zeni inducted to the Academy of Master Educators

Michael Weaver, MD; Elaheh Ashtari, PsyD; and Cristian Zeni, MD, PhD, all faculty members at the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, were recently inducted into the Academy of Master Educators (AME) at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth.

The AME is a formal organization of distinguished scholars that recognizes faculty members for their teaching and educational excellence. Prospective members are committed to the enhancement of medical and graduate education.

A call to faculty is sent out annually at an open house requesting a formal letter of intent to apply for membership with the academy. The faculty member must be a full or part-time employee at McGovern Medical School for at least three years. Applicants must submit a letter of intent to the academy, a letter of nomination by their chair or division director, and their current CV.

Following a review by the selection committee, individual faculty are invited to apply for membership. The application process is extensive, and requires documentation of direct
teaching, development of teaching materials, mentoring, educational leadership, and educational scholarship. Letters of recommendation are also required. A panel reviews all these documents before making a selection for new members.

Being a member of the AME not only recognizes an individual’s teaching skills, but also allows for the opportunity to exchange ideas with fellow educators. When applying, Weaver had the opportunity to reflect on his teaching experiences and how he could enhance these skills.

“I feel honored to be recognized for doing something that I really enjoy,” Weaver said. “I look forward to the opportunity to work with other accomplished teachers and expand my own teaching abilities.”

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**Little receives grant from DOD**

Deborah Little, PhD, director of research at the UTHealth Trauma and Resilience Center, recently received a two-year grant from the Department of Defense to help Veterans from the 1990-1991 Gulf War who continue to suffer from Gulf War illness, a condition that is associated with exposure to toxins during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Little’s proposed study, titled “Expanding the characterization and application of clinical MRI markers in Gulf War illness,” looks to develop and validate an evidence-based assessment tool, called the “Gulf War Illness Brain Injury Scale.” By conducting this study, Little hopes improve the characterization of the types and degree of brain pathology, and to find a standard and consistent MRI measure to use in research studies to better understand MRI findings associated with Veterans and Gulf War illness. Such a tool would also serve to aid diagnosis of a condition not acknowledged by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It’s been 30 years since the Gulf War ended. According to Little, between 25% and 30% of veterans who deployed developed Gulf War illness. Currently, effective treatments do not exist.

Little’s study intends to enroll every veteran who has participated in multiple Department of Defense-funded studies. Many Veterans in these studies have expressed their concerns with the lack of understanding of how toxin exposures from their service have affected their lives and how these changes will progress with age. Clinically, MRI is not used as a diagnostic tool but instead as a method to rule out other diseases. Yet, numerous research studies have documented that changes in brain structure and function are in fact associated with exposures. This leaves the big question of whether MRI can be used as part of a diagnostic battery and to help inform how potential treatments affect brain function.

Little is partnering up with faculty in the Department of Neuroradiology, Roy F. Riascos-Castaneda, MD, and Arash Kamali, MD, neuroradiologists and faculty in the Department of Diagnostic and Interventional Imaging at McGovern Medical School. The pair will first conduct a review of magnetic resonance images from Gulf War Veterans who are ill and those who are not ill. The group will look for common types of pathology in ill veterans that aren’t present in healthy veterans.

From this information, a checklist of common findings will be developed. This will be used in future studies to better understand Gulf War illness and improve treatment options for those affected.
two different groups of veterans as part of their clinical impressions. From the list of common findings, a visual rating scale will be developed. These ratings will be tested again in different veteran groups to see if these traits exist consistently in different study groups.

Little’s passion is working with Veterans. She hopes that every study conducted brings them closer to understanding their own brain health as well as identifying potential treatments those suffering from Gulf War illness.

“I’m grateful that I have the opportunity to keep pushing forward with the hope of offering them tangible validation,” Little said. “I would like everyone who reads this to take a moment to consider the service of the men and women in uniform, and then think about the sacrifice they and their families have made. I’m grateful for the opportunity to work on their behalf.”

Nguyen was introduced to group psychotherapy while on her child psychology rotations at UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center. She was so interested, she started to pursue other group psychotherapy opportunities at her other rotation sites. After reading more about the AGPA Connect Conference, she decided to apply for the scholarship to further her knowledge regarding group psychotherapy.

As a part of her application, Nguyen submitted a letter of support from assistant professors Ana Ugueto, PhD, and Zeshen Wu, MD.

This isn't the first award Nguyen has received. Back in November, she received the Travel Award from the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry. Prior to this year, Nguyen wasn’t aware of these awards. As a co-contributor to the residents/fellows awards book, she learned about these opportunities and what benefit they could have to her education.

She is thankful for the support she’s received from the department.

“I am very grateful and excited to receive these two awards,” Nguyen said. “I am thankful for all of the support from my faculty and the program in my educational endeavors. Our program is very supportive of residents, and fellows' educational endeavors, so if an opportunity catch your interest in the Award Book - go for it!”

Participate in an international COVID-19 survey
Jane Hamilton, PhD, MPH, invites you to participate in a large international survey project called “Collaborative Outcomes study on Health and Functioning during Infection Times (COH-FIT).”

The COH-FIT project aims to identify risk and protective factors that will inform prevention and intervention programs for the COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics in the future. The project involves almost 200 investigators in more than 35 countries.

Take the survey.

Clinical trials

The following clinical trials are back in operation, following all necessary safety guidelines. If you're interested, contact the appropriate study.

**Neuroimaging and Brain Cell Structure and Function in Substance Abuse (In Vitro and In Vivo Evidence of Neurotoxicity in Substance Abuse)**
Contact: 713-500-DRUG (3784)

**Management of Chronic Pain and PTSD in Veterans with tDCS+Prolonged Exposure**
Contact: [Melba A. Hernandez-Tejada, PhD, DHA PI](mailto:melba.hernandez-tejada@uth.tmc.edu), 713-486-2524

**Candesartan as an Adjunctive Treatment for Bipolar Depression**
Contact: [Valeria Cuellar](mailto:valeria.cuellar@uth.tmc.edu), 713-486-2841

To see all open studies, visit our [website](#).

We're hiring!

The following positions are open at our department:

**Adult Psychiatrist – Baytown – Outpatient**
*Telemed 80%, Onsite 20%*
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

**Extra Supplement for location**

**Adult Psychiatrist – Settegast**
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

**Adult Psychiatrist – Acres Homes**
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

**Child and Adult Psychiatrist – Rosenberg – Outpatient**
*Telemed 80%, Onsite 20%*
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

**Extra Supplement for provider to see life span**

**Child Psychiatrist (Bilingual Spanish/English) – Spring Branch – Outpatient**
*Telemed 50%, Onsite 50%*
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

**Research Assistant I**
Translational Psychiatry Program
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

https://uth.referrals.selectminds.com/via/GabrielF-3QDBp/jobs/research-assistant-i-psychiatry-behavioral-sciences-9112

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To find out more information about these academically driven positions or to apply, please forward a CV and letter of interest to Jair C. Soares, MD, PhD, Professor and Chair, 1941 East Road, Houston, TX 77054, email: Jair.C.Soares@uth.tmc.edu, phone 713-486-2507, fax 713-486-2553.

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**Publications**

Convergent evidence for the antiviral effects of several FDA-approved phenothiazine antipsychotics against SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses

Rodrigo Machado-Vieira, João Quevedo, Lokesh Shahani, MD, MPH, spoke with FOX 26 News about an increase in mental health-related visits to emergency rooms among children and teens and the signs parents should look out for signs that might indicate
Addressing the psychological impact of elder mistreatment: Community-based training partnerships and telehealth-delivered interventions
Melba A. Hernandez-Tejada, Theresa Skojec, Gabrielle Frook, Mara Steedley, & Tatiana M. Davidson

From QAAPAPE 1 to QAAPAPE 2: how do we move from one algorithm to another one with Long Acting Antipsychotics (LAIs)
Sylvain Grignon, Marc André Roy, David Bloom, Ossama Osman, Leena Amiri, Karim Abdel Aziz, Syed Fahad Javaid, & Danilo Arnone

Utility of a brief assessment of opioid demand among post-discharge trauma care patients
Yoon JH, Suchting R, Kessler D, Soder HE, Kapoor S, Stotts AL, Heads AM, Harvin JA, Green CE, Lane SD, Schmitz JM

Cristian Zeni, MD, PhD, spoke to Telemundo Houston Channel 47 about an increase in mental-health related visits to emergency rooms among children and teens and the signs parents should look out for that might indicate anxiety or depression.

As many are dealing with stress after the statewide winter storms, Jennifer Hughes, PhD, spoke to FOX 26 News about grounding and breathing techniques to help bring you back to the present moment when you feel overwhelmed.

Registration is now open!

For the month of March, we are running an early bird special special. Take $50 off if you're a physician and $25 off if you're a student. At checkout, use code 1688HCP for physicians and code 1688STUDENT for students. Share this with any of your colleagues! We hope to see you for this virtual conference!
Save the Date

April 10, 2021

12th Annual Psychiatry Update

Treatment Innovation for Veterans and First Responders

Register now

Join our mail list

We appreciate your donation!

Contact us

Louis A. Faillace, MD, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth
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Email
Website

Connect with us: