GAP and Neuroscience: The Future is Now

Neuroscience will be a highlight at our spring meeting. Bernard Beitman, Professor and Former Chairman of Psychiatry at the University of Missouri, will give the plenary address, “What Psychiatrists Need to Know about the Brain.” Dr. Beitman is the lead author of *Integrating Psychotherapy and Pharmacotherapy: Dissolving the Mind-Brain Barrier* as well as numerous other articles on this topic. He will also be meeting with the task force/committee on Neuroscience as a consultant.

If the Board of Directors approves, our April meeting will also see the launch of a new committee on Neuroscience. The committee is the outgrowth of a task force that has been meeting for the past year, led by Devra Braun. Responses to my on-line polling of the Board of Directors as well as the Steering Committee about the formation of this new committee were overwhelmingly positive. Why does such a committee make sense for GAP?

It makes perfect sense in light of GAP’s history and traditions. GAP’s focus has never been on presenting the latest research findings to the profession or to the public. Rather, it has been on reviewing and analyzing already published data in various fields relevant to psychiatry and developing publications that interpret these data. When necessary, GAP committees have brought in outside expertise to help them think in new ways about problems. In doing so, we have often looked beyond the walls of our academic psychiatry departments, our private offices, and our mental health organizations and institutions. We have focused on such topics as societal trends, normal and psychopathological development, assessment and classification of disorders, biological, psychological and social treatments, service delivery, teaching and public policy. Many of the developments that have vastly impacted patient care and the practice of psychiatry have occurred outside of our usual venues. Neuroscience is simply another example of these developments. Much of ground-breaking neuroscience research has taken place in laboratories at places such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or NIMH, neither of which has a medical school.

I think the strong enthusiasm for this new committee stems from the recognition that developments in neuroscience have enormous implications for patient care and public policy, and that there is a need for GAP to be engaged in articulating these implications. For example, we are all excited by the findings of brain imaging research. But what is the appropriate use of brain imaging in clinical psychiatry?

As I write this I am reading the Ethics Column in the most recent newsletter of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). Barbara Hale-Richlen, M. D., who is completing her residency in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, describes her experience interviewing for a job with a private practice in which the interviewer describes his plans to “capture the market on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder” by subjecting children to SPECT scans to “prove” the diagnosis. Dr. Hale-Richlen goes on to raise questions about the ethics of
claiming to be able to diagnose a disorder by a SPECT scan as well as of charging patients $3500 to do so. When I chaired the APA Council on Children, Adolescents and Their Families, we responded to similar concerns raised by an APA member by developing what we hoped would become an APA position statement on this topic (it became a “resource document,” a less forceful pronouncement than a position statement). We had no neuroscientists on the Council, so one might reasonably ask (and some did) what business we had producing this document. Our business was concern about the impact of performing a procedure on children whose safety and efficacy were inadequately substantiated, and whose use seemed to be growing. We reviewed all the literature we could find, summarized it, and sent the document to experts in the field to review. We made revisions based on the feedback we got, presented it to the Joint Reference Commission, and eventually got it approved and published.\(^2\)

The Council did what we could, working within the APA structure, to bring our concerns before the field. Some of us were disappointed that our final product did not become a position paper. The APA, for all its strength in numbers and resources, is also limited by its need to avoid taking positions that may alienate its members (and lead to resignations). GAP is much less constrained. The reports of its committees are subject to review by the Publications Board, and eventually, the President, but the review process is mainly concerned with quality issues (such as whether the conclusions of the report are substantiated by the evidence presented). The result is that GAP committees, in contrast to components of larger organizations, have much more freedom to take strong advocacy positions. The downside, of course, is that they don’t automatically have a venue that will publicize their positions. But, to the extent that they get published in widely read journals, they will have an impact.

Our plenary speaker at the spring 2007 was Frances Champagne, who spoke on “Epigenetic Programming of Gene Expression and Behavior.” She demonstrated evidence from a rodent model that the environmental experiences of infancy can alter gene expression and thus behavior through epigenetic modification of steroid genes. The idea that the quality of mothering is important to development does not come as a surprise. What excites us is the identification of links between brain function and developmental psychology and clinical experience. It is the implications of the research that intrigue us, and it is these implications that are important for public policy, teaching, and practice. It is in identifying and articulating these implications, and making recommendations about how the field should respond to them that GAP can play a leading role. It seems to me that this is what advancing psychiatry is really all about.


Lois T. Flaherty, M.D.

President
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2008

10:00 a.m.  GAP Office Opens  Masefield A Room
10:00 a.m.  Finance Committee Meeting  Masefield B Room
11:00 a.m.  Contributions Committee  Masefield B Room
12:00 noon  Publications Board  Hutchinson A Room
2:00 p.m.  Board of Directors  Cooper B Room
4:00 p.m.  Fellows Meeting  Cooper A Room
4:00 p.m.  Fellows Selection Committee  Masefield B Room
5:30 p.m.  Reception of the Board of Directors  Room 688
6:30 p.m.  Fellows Dinner  Cooper A Room
7:00 p.m.  Task Force on Neuroscience  Red Oak Terrace
           Presentation by Drs. Beitman and Viamontes
9:00 p.m. -  Hospitality Room  Irving A and B Rooms
11:00 p.m.  Hosted by: Committee on College Student

Thursday Committee Meetings

Child  8:00 p.m.  Library Room
College Student  7:00 p.m.  Studio Room
Neuroscience Task Force  2:00 p.m.  John Jay Suite/Room 102
Psychopathology  3:30 p.m.  Gallery Room
FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2008

7:30 a.m. Breakfast Cooper-Greeley Rooms
8:30 a.m. General Membership Meeting Cooper-Greeley Rooms
9:30 a.m. Committee Meetings
10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
12:00 noon Luncheon Cooper-Greeley Rooms
              Steering Committee Meeting Irving A Room
1:00 p.m. Fellows Meeting Irving B Room
2:00 p.m. Committee Meetings
3:00 p.m. Coffee Break
5:00 p.m. Poster Session and Juice Break Foyer–Cooper-Greeley Rooms
5:30 p.m. Plenary Session: What Psychiatrists Need to Know About the Brain
          Bernard Beitman, M.D.
6:30 p.m. Cocktail Reception Red Oak Terrace
7:30 p.m. Dinner Cooper-Greeley Rooms
9:00 p.m. Hospitality Foyer - Cooper-Greeley Rooms
           Hosted by: Committee on Disabilities

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2008

7:30 a.m. Breakfast Cooper-Greeley Rooms
                      Steering Committee Meeting Irving B Room
Steering Committee Meeting Irving B Room
Fellows Breakfast Meeting Irving A Room
9:00 a.m. Committee Meetings
11:30 a.m. Luncheon Cooper-Greeley Rooms
12:00 noon Board of Directors Wrap Up Meeting Cooper B Room
COMMITTEE MEETINGS

ADOLESCENCE
AGING
ADDICTIONS
CHILD PSYCHIATRY
COLLEGE STUDENT
CULTURAL PSYCHIATRY
DISABILITIES
DISASTERS AND TERRORISM
FAMILY
GENDER ISSUES AND MENTAL HEALTH
HUMAN SEXUALITY
IMG
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
LGBT
MEDICAL EDUCATION
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
PLANNING, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
PREVENTIVE PSYCHIATRY
PSYCHIATRY AND THE COMMUNITY
PSYCHIATRY AND THE LAW
PSYCHIATRY AND NEUROSCIENCE
PSYCHIATRY AND RELIGION
PSYCHOPATHOLOGY
PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY
RESEARCH
SOCIAL ISSUES
TERRORISM and POLITICAL VIOLENCE
THERAPEUTIC CARE
PSYCHOTHERAPY
WORK AND ORGANIZATIONS

ROOM 688
MASEFIELD B ROOM
VANDERBILT SUITE/ROOM 107
LIBRARY ROOM
STUDIO ROOM
PORTICO ROOM
LYNDHURST SUITE/ROOM 104
ROOM 217
HUTCHINSON B ROOM
HUTCHINSON A ROOM
ROOM 207
JOHN CARRERE SUITE/ROOM 101
VERANDA ROOM
ZENGER ROOM
PARLOR ROOM
ROOM 201
ROOM 305
ROOM 215
KYKUIT SUITE/ROOM 103
SLEEPY HOLLOW/ROOM 105
JOHN JAY SUITE/ROOM 102
ROOM 209
GALLERY ROOM
ROOM 634
ROOM 203
ROOM 211
ROOM 221
ROOM 219
ROOM 223
VAN CORTLANDT/ROOM 106
Announcements...

The Task Force on Psychiatry and Neuroscience has exciting news.

Drs. Bernard Breitman and George Viamontes will attend the April meeting – Dr. Beitman as plenary speaker and consultant to the Task Force and Dr. Viamontes as guest. Among their numerous recent publications, they coedited the April 2006 and 2007 issues of Psychiatric Annals, on the subjects of, “The Neurobiology of Psychotherapy” (2006), and “The Neurobiology of the Unconscious” (2007).

We plan to work with Dr. Beitman to write a brief paper on his plenary subject – Why Psychiatrists Should Learn About the Brain, and What they Need to Know.” We are also in the final stages of editing a brief opinion piece on "Biological Psychiatry: Past, Present, and Future."

The Task Force is soon likely to become an actual committee. We would welcome suggestions of appropriate colleagues who have some expertise in neuroscience and may be interested in joining the committee and GAP.

In the meantime, GAP members who would like to join Dr. Beitman and the Task Force without any conflict with their regular committee activities, can contact Devra Braun (at DevraB@aol.com, or (203) 622-2394) and join us on Thursday evening from 7:00 - 9:30 pm.

Why and What Psychiatrists Should Know about the Brain:

Dr. Bernard Beitman, our plenary speaker, will be leading a teaching discussion on Thursday evening, April 10th on the subject of why and what psychiatrists should know about the brain. We plan a dinner meeting from 7:00 pm through 9:30 or 10 pm in a room at the Renaissance Hotel Red Oak Terrace.

Using animated slides, Dr. Beitman will explore basic neuroanatomy that has specific relevance to the mind-brain phenomena underlying psychotherapy. Dr. Beitman has written and lectured extensively on the topic of the neurobiology of the unconscious and of psychotherapy. He is Professor and Former Chair of the University of Missouri Department of Psychiatry.

RSVP to Dr. Devra Braun ASAP to assure seating availability by March 31st.
Email:  DevraB@aol.com;  phone 203-622-2394
I'm trying to increase our name recognition. I also have a call into the Scientologists to see if they'll come picket us.

GAP the RAND Corporation of PSYCHIATRY
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DATES OF FUTURE GAP MEETINGS

2008
April 10-12
November 13-15
2010
April 15-17
November 11-13
2012
March 29-31
November 15-17
2014
April 10-12
November 13-15
2009
April 16-18
November 12-14
2011
April 7-9
November 10-12
2013
April 4-6
November 14-16
2015
April 16-18
November 12-14