

FDA to Extend Black Box Warning on Antidepressants to Adults

By Roger Peele, MD

A Food and Drug Administration panel after hearing testimony on the lifesaving benefits of antidepressants from a cadre of psychiatrists and patients, nevertheless, has recommended that the black box warning stating that antidepressants may increase "suicidality" be extended to include adults up to age 25.

The FDA currently has this warning posted for children and adolescents.

WPS members Roger Peele, MD, Louis Kopolow, Darrel Regier, MD, Joshua Weiner, MD and Carolyn Robinowitz, MD were among the 75 persons who testified at the December 13 hearing in Bethesda. Other APA members testifying at the hearing were: Steve Daviss, MD (Maryland) Nada Stotland, MD (Illinois), Paula Clayton, MD (New York City), Chip Reynolds, MD (Pennsylvania) and Eric Caine, MD (Rochester, NY). These psychiatrists all testified against extending the warning, stressing the benefits of SSRIs. Their remarks also included data that sug-

gested that the black box application to children and adolescents applied in 2004 has already led to a decrease in antidepressant prescribing and an increase in suicide. While some of the testifiers detailed the negative experiences they had had with antidepressants, a number of patients described the lifesaving effect of these medications for them. Hanna Stotland, daughter of Nada Stotland, MD told the committee that she was too depressed to be able to do her high school work, then went on antidepressants in 1993 and turned her life around, graduating from Harvard Law School a few years ago.

Despite these efforts, the panel recommended the black box extension, reacting to a single study in front of them. That "suicidality" is not suicide did not appear to interest them. Nor were they interested in testimony suggesting that the black box warning may have already done harm to a large number of children and adolescents.

The testimonies of Dr. Peele and Dr. Kopolow are available on the WPS website at www.dcpsych.org. ■

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WPS Office to Relocate

The Washington Psychiatric Society is looking for a new home for our executive offices. Our current landlord, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has terminated our lease in order to bring off site functions under the roof at 3615 Wisconsin Ave, NW. WPS will have to vacate by February 28. Our search is underway to locate a suitable facility in Washington, DC. Please watch the next issue of this newsletter, the WPSNet listserv and our website at www.dcpsych.org for our new address, and telephone and fax numbers. The email addresses for Walter Hill and Rosemary Polley will not change, whill@wdcpsych.org and rpolley@wdcpsych.org. ■

The President's Column



By Richard Ratner, MD.

Bright Spots

No one who knows me will accuse me of being a cockeyed optimist, but I have to say that my spirits have been raised recently by the news of numerous positive changes in WPS' universe. I'm thinking mainly of changes in the occupancy of elective offices, changes in staff positions that the newly elected have brought about, and changes in relationships with our colleagues and with decision makers in government.

In Maryland, of course, we have a new governor and Democratic majorities in both state houses. Traditionally, Democrats have shown more interest in mental and public health than their Republican counterparts, and while Governor Ehrlich did have a special interest in youth corrections and rehabilitation, we can hope that Governor O'Malley will turn even more attention to this and other mental health issues.

In addition to various general expectations we may hold, we have reason to believe that one specific goal will be fulfilled this year in Maryland: passage of the "Eist" bill, which will revise the way in which the Board of Physicians goes about dealing with complaints regarding our members. While the legal battle between Harold and the Board continues, with the Board having appealed Harold's most recent victory in Montgomery County Circuit Court to a higher court, we plan to introduce, through Senator Frosh and others, legislation that will in the future protect our colleagues from being caught in an impossible bind: either releasing records in violation of a patient's privacy or having to defy the Board and face sanctions. The bill will require the Board to notify those patients whose records it seeks and give them the opportunity to oppose the release before the psychiatrist need take any action at all.

Contributing to my expectation of success for the Eist legislation is the seamless relationship we have forged

with our colleagues at the Maryland Psychiatric Society, who have joined with us in sponsoring this legislation. Much credit is due to our "Eist Committee", including Brian Crowley, Shira Rubenstein and Louise Postman, Gustavo Goldstein and Roger Peele for having worked out all the initial differences with our MPS colleagues, including Jeff Janofsky and President Bill Prescott, and to Scott Hagaman, a psychiatrist who is this year's president of the Maryland State Medical Society ("MedChi") and has been instrumental in bringing this all-important ally into the fold.

In Virginia we have a new governor, entering his second year in office, who is certainly more sympathetic to the needs of our patients statewide than certain of his predecessors, and we can take satisfaction from the indefatigable work of our colleague, Eric Steckler, a virtual one man lobbying shop, whose creative and persevering pursuit of our objectives in Richmond are a joy to see. Most recently Eric has hired a professional fundraiser who is likely to help raise money for our priorities in Virginia.

But in some ways, I've saved the best news for last. The winds of change are blowing through the District government, engendered by a dynamic new mayor. Mayor Fenty has made two important and wise decisions regarding mental health in the past month: he has decided to retain Steve Baron as Head of the Dept. of Mental Health (DMH), and he has called on Patrick Canavan to be the new CEO of St. Elizabeths Hospital. Steve has proved during his brief tenure to be a willing listener to the concerns that the WPS has about public mental health in the District, as articulated by Connie Dunlap, the chair of our DC Chapter, and Bob Keisling, our legislative rep. Now comes the news that he will be supported by Patrick, whom I feel is nothing less than a dynamite choice to head up the hospital.

Unlike some past occupants of offices in the DMH, Patrick is thoroughly familiar with the hospital he has been drafted to lead, having worked in the trenches as a ward administrator at John Howard (the forensic inpatient building) for five years. He then moved over to the Mayor's office and worked there in a series of increasingly responsible positions until reaching the directorship of the Dept. of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. So, in addition to a thorough familiarity with the workings of the executive branch

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and most of the key players, he actually has an understanding of the problems and issues that hamper patient care. He comes not a moment too soon, as he is in position to oversee the construction of the new St. Elizabeths, whose groundbreaking occurred just a few weeks ago.

I count Patrick as a friend, and I am personally friendly with some talented people he is drafting out of the hospital ranks and giving new responsibility to solve the problems they have had to cope with but couldn't influence. For example, the hospital has been denied full accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), a black mark against it and its training programs, has been the subject of a highly critical report by the Justice Department, and is the target of a suit by the nonprofit University Legal Service (ULS) because of substandard care. However, morale at the hospital has spiked upward because of this appointment, which is hopefully a prologue to some meaningful change.

Finally, the WPS will soon be moving to a new space: we don't know quite where yet, but we know that it will have more room for our executive director, Walter Hill, to allow him to more efficiently fulfill his expanding list of responsibilities. Thanks to the dues increase that the membership passed this summer and an increase in members, we expect to be able to make this move and remain on a solid financial footing for the coming year. I can thus wish you all a Happy New Year with more optimism than I have been able to muster in quite a while. Stay tuned to see how this all works out. ■

WPS Calendar 2007*

January 15 – Mental Health Advocacy Day, Virginia General Assembly, Richmond

January 22 – Educational Program – “Vagus Nerve Stimulation” 6:30-9:00 p.m. Maggiano’s, 5333 Wisconsin Ave, NW, Washington, DC, Mitchell Kling, MD presenter

January 31 – Mental Health Advocacy Day, Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis

February 1 – ECP dinner and seminar “Tax Law for Early Career Psychiatrists” 6:30-9:30 p.m. Chef Geoff’s, 3201 New Mexico Ave, NW, Washington, DC, Armin Kuder, JD presenter

February 13 – Maryland Psychiatric PAC Legislative Reception 6:30-8:30 p.m. Annapolis

March 18-21 – APA Advocacy Days Seminar and Capitol Hill visits

March 24 – CME Program “Diagnosing and Treating PTSD” (joint sponsorship with American Society of Psychoanalytic Physicians) 8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon GWU Hospital Auditorium

May 19-24 – APA Annual Meeting, San Diego.

September 15 – Symposium “The Interface of Psychiatric and Somatic Medicine”, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. GWU Hospital Auditorium

November 2-4 – APA Assembly Meeting, JW Marriott, Washington, DC

November 2 – WPS Annual Awards Banquet – location TBA

December 12 – Suburban Maryland Chapter Legislative Reception 6:30-8:30 p.m. Bethesda Marriott Hotel

*Additional programs will be noted in the newsletter, website, listserv and mailings as they are scheduled. Open Meetings of the Board of Directors – The WPS Board meets at 7:30 p.m. at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington, 4228 Wisconsin Ave, NW, Washington, DC on the second Monday of each month, excluding August. WPS members are invited to attend these meetings. To suggest items for the agenda or to sign up to speak, contact Walter Hill by phone at 202-244-7750 or email whill@wdcpsych no later the 10 business days before a Board meeting. ■

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WPS Members Active in Education, APA and Politics



WPS Northern Virginia Chapter Chair, Eric Steckler, MD (r) stands with U.S. Representative Eric Cantor (R-VA) at the Capitol Hill Chanukah party on December 18. Rep. Cantor sits on the House Ways and Means Committee and was Deputy Chief Majority Whip in 2006.



Eliot Sorel, MD (far right) invited WPS members to his home on December 8 for an evening with APA candidates for national office. With Dr. Sorel are l-r Neeraj Gondotra, MD, Constance Dunlap, MD, Jan Hutchinson, MD and Shanique Cartwright, MD. Attendees heard candidate positions and had their questions about APA's future goals and directions answered.



Residents (l-r) Susan Kinkead-Acree, MD, Diana Martin, MD and Mozhdeh Roozegar, MD share a moment of conversation at the WPS MIT symposium, "Keys to Your Career" on December 9 in Arlington. The symposium brought together residents from Washington's four programs and others from as far away as Baltimore and Charlottesville to learn about opportunities in psychiatry and practical information on starting, building and managing a practice.



WPS President Richard Ratner, MD (center) checks his notes for his session on forensic psychiatry to the "Keys" audience.



"Keys to Your Career" faculty members (l-r) Anton Trinidad, MD and Robert Keisling, MD lead a group discussion at the event. Dr. Trinidad led the discussion on academic psychiatry and Dr. Keisling addressed public sector practice.



Scott Meyers, MD and Suena Huang, MD of George Washington University take part in a small group breakout session at the "Keys" symposium. Dr. Huang along with Mozhdeh Roozegar, MD of St. Elizabeths, Samantha Shlakman, MD of Georgetown and Vernon Nathaniel, MD of Howard served as the planning committee for the event.



"Keys" attendees gathered in small group setting to discuss with practitioners the ins and outs of a variety of practice settings. Here Constance Dunlap, MD (left rear) leads a discussion on private practice.



APA's Director of Healthcare Systems and Finance, Sam Muszynski, JD (r) shares a moment with WPS Executive Director, Walter Hill following Mr. Muszynski's "Keys" presentation on "Managed Care and You." WPS Attorney Armin Kuder, JD also presented to the residents on "The Law and Psychiatry." Jacqueline Melonas, RN, JD from PRMS gave the luncheon address on risk management. Eric Steckler, MD discussed child and adolescent practice issues with attendees while managing to snap all the pictures you see here.



The WPS CME Committee presented "New Medications in the Treatment of Substance Use Disorders" on December 14. Here, CME Committee Chair, Elizabeth Morrison, MD welcomes attendees to the program in Suburban Hospital's Atrium Conference Center. At right is George Kolodner, MD, Medical Director of Kolmac Clinic who was the evening's speaker. Next CME Committee event is January 22 at Maggiano's in Chevy Chase. The topic is Vagus Nerve Stimulation with Mitchell Kling, MD.



Stuart Sotsky, MD, (r) WPS Public Affairs Chair, chats with fellow attendees at the Dec. 14 CME program.



Stan Slater, MD and Carol Kleinman, MD were among those attending on Dec. 14.



Dr. Kolodner fields a question during his presentation.



To follow up the "Keys to Your Career" symposium, Eric Steckler, MD invited MITs to his home for informal conversation with established and early career psychiatrists, and a holiday party on Dec. 23. Here Frank Simpson, MD shares his decades of experience with residents, Susan Kinkead-Acree, MD and Uma Kumarappan, MD.



WPS member Nancy Clayton, MD enjoys the hospitality of Dr. Steckler's home. Dr. Clayton retired from the Navy last year and is now in private practice in Northern Virginia.



(l-r) Michael Spevak, MD, checks the PowerPoint screen while Ann Eist and Harold Eist, MD follow the handouts during Dr. Kolodner's presentation.

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Announcements

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON SOCIETY FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS SPRING 2007 EVENTS

"Work in the Parent-Toddler Groups at the Anna Freud Center," will be presented February 24, 2007 at the Baltimore Washington Center for Psychoanalysis, from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Marie Zaphiriou Woods, will lead the seminar and Justine Reeves, DPsych., will lead the discussion. For more information see www.bwanalysis.org or call 301-470-3635 or 410-792-8060.

"New Approaches to Working with Parents: Applications and Techniques," will be presented March 3, 2007 at the Sheraton College Park Hotel from 8:15-4:00 p.m. Speakers are Jack

Novick, Ph.D., Kerry Kelly Novick, Michael Jasnow, Ph.D., Anne Jeagerman, M.S. and Justine Kalas Reeves, D. Psych. Fee \$90/\$45 students (lunch included). For more information see www.bwanalysis.org or call 301-470-3635 or 410-792-8060.

Close Ups: Psychoanalysts Look at Film, a film and discussion series at the Baltimore Museum of Art, Fridays in March. "Tsotsi: March 9; "The Man Who Loved Women" March 16; "Men of Honor" March 23; and "The Return" March 30. CMEs and CEUs available. Open to the public. Sponsored by the Baltimore Washington Institute for Psychoanalysis. For more information see www.bwanalysis.org or call 401-792-8060 or 301-470-3635.

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Effective Communication with Legislators Is Key to Success and Not That Hard To Do

By Cal Whitehead, Northern Virginia Chapter/Psychiatric Society of Virginia Lobbyist

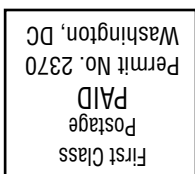
State legislators do pay attention to their constituents. Making the effort to communicate with them your views and the impact specific bills will have on patient care and psychiatric practice is a simple, but important step you can take. Here are some tips for communicating effectively with your legislators.

Never underestimate the influence you have on legislators. They do respond to constituents and need the advice of the professionals like you.

- Visit the “who’s my legislator” section of your state legislature’s home page and enter your home (voting) address to identify your senator, delegates or council member. In Maryland <http://mlis.state.md.us>; in Virginia <http://legis.state.va.us>; in Washington, DC <http://dccouncil.washington.dc.us>
- Use email to communicate with legislators whenever possible. It’s quick; it’s free; it’s personal.
- When organizing a letter-writing campaign, make it as broad-based as possible. Include colleagues, family members, advocates – any-

one who has a stake in maintaining high quality psychiatric care and improving delivery of services

- When telephoning, don’t be disappointed if you talk to an aide. Often these people are the ones who can best advise legislators on the critical issues. Keep your message brief and make sure the person who receives your call gets your name, address and phone number
- Be brief and to the point by mentioning specific bill numbers and how legislation will impact psychiatric care.
- Be passionate but not emotional. Use facts and real-world anecdotes to support your positions. ■



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