

MINDSCAPES

MGH DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS • SPRING 2010

Global Psychiatry Division Named for Pioneering Psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce, MD

Last spring, the MGH Department of Psychiatry established a permanent tribute to Chester M. Pierce, MD, by naming the hospital's Global Psychiatry Division in his honor. Dr. Pierce, a professor emeritus in both Psychiatry and Education at Harvard University and a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital, has dedicated his career over six decades to reducing suffering associated with mental illnesses.

Dr. Pierce achieved distinction early in his life outside of medicine, as the first African-American college football player to play in a game below the Mason Dixon line when his Harvard team played the University of Virginia in 1947. In 2007, that same university awarded him the Vivian Pinn Distinguished Lecturer's Award to honor a lifetime of achievement in the field of health disparities.

Dr. Pierce has had an illustrious career in academic medicine. He has authored nearly 200 publications, lectured throughout the world and spoken at more than 100 colleges and universities in the U.S. Beginning in the 1970s, he conducted groundbreaking research on the psychological and physiological effects of harsh environments including Antarctica and outer space. "His accomplishments are staggering, but that's not what defines Chet for me," says Chief of Psychiatry Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD. "There are individuals who inspire us by their deeds; there are individuals who inspire us by their character and moral force. Chet is both."

GLOBAL BURDEN OF MENTAL ILLNESSES

Inspired by Dr. Pierce's vision, the department organized a groundbreaking "African Diaspora" conference in 2002, bringing together psychiatrists of African descent from all over the world to discuss common challenges facing their communities. Soon after, the MGH Department of Psychiatry became the first hospital psychiatry department in the country to establish a division of global psychiatry. The division's mission is to expand the department's work internationally, to reduce the burden of mental illnesses caused by political conflict and civil war, natural disasters and climate change, and lack of access to adequate mental health care.

This mission could not be more crucial. In *The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 Update*, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that depression, alcohol use disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder account for four of the top 10 causes of disability worldwide. By 2030, the WHO estimates that

depression will be the leading cause of disease or injury worldwide.

TWO-WAY TRAINING AND EDUCATION

To address the acute shortage of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and other mental health workers in developing nations, the leadership of the Pierce Global Psychiatry Division views education and training as a priority. "Every initiative the division undertakes is bi-directional, enabling

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— Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD, Chief of Psychiatry



MGH Photography

Left to right: David C. Henderson, MD, Chester M. Pierce, MD, and Gregory Fricchione, MD, at the Harvard Faculty Club at a reception and dinner in April 2009. The event celebrated the naming of the MGH Global Psychiatry Division in honor of Dr. Pierce, a psychiatrist at MGH and professor emeritus of Psychiatry and of Education at Harvard University.

From the Chief

The mission of our great institution – Massachusetts General Hospital – includes patient care, education, research and community service. For Mass General, and MGH Psychiatry, “community” refers to our neighbors in the Boston area, but also to all humanity who suffer. As we have assets and capabilities to help alleviate suffering universally, we are

compelled to deploy them. We do this with humility, appreciating that we are going forward not just to teach, but also to learn, not just to heal but to transform who we are as caregivers. The establishment of the Chester M. Pierce Global Psychiatry Division reflects these values and principles.

We continually remind ourselves that it is never adequate to be trained, to practice, and to teach without adding to knowledge. Only through

unrelenting pursuit of new understanding can we usher in better treatments and even begin to prevent the onset of illness. This year, the department’s academic medical research enterprise will attract \$55 million in funding, and some 300 studies are underway to explore the brain mechanisms of psychiatric disorders and to develop more effective remedies. A few of our faculty’s contributions to knowledge generation and dissemination are cited in this issue, *pages 6-7*.

The year 2009 marked the completion of our 75th year. The Anniversary Gala last October brought together our diverse constituencies for a rousing celebration of the department’s legacy and promise. Individual and foundation donors comprise our newest constituency, and the charitable support they provide is making a huge difference. It was particularly gratifying this year to complete the funding of our third endowed professorship at Harvard Medical School, *page 8*, which honors my predecessor, Ned Cassem, SJ, MD, a pioneer of psychiatry in medicine.

We look forward to having even greater impact in the next 75 years.



Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD
Psychiatrist-in-Chief, Massachusetts General Hospital
Stanley Cobb Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Global Psychiatry

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Mass General faculty to both teach and learn,” says Gregory L. Fricchione, MD, associate chief of Psychiatry and the Pierce Global Psychiatry Division’s founding director. The division has mounted professional exchanges and on-the-ground medical education programs in countries including Ethiopia, Mexico, Liberia, Malaysia, South Africa and Uganda. It has also established a chief residency in international and community mental health at Mass General.

In addition, third- and fourth year MGH Psychiatry residents have taken elective courses in Nepal, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Belize, South Africa, Ethiopia, Liberia, Australia, Indonesia and China. “In order to be a 21st century psychiatrist you must embrace the concept of a global mission, which requires a new educational model at home,” says Dr. Pierce.

NEW DIRECTOR APPOINTED

In July 2009, David C. Henderson, MD, was appointed as the division’s new director. “Dave Henderson is the perfect person to pick up the torch and carry global psychiatry forward,” says Dr. Fricchione. “He’s a successful researcher, has a wealth of experience on the ground in ‘hot spots’ around the globe, is an intellectually gifted psychiatrist and is a wonderful ambassador for the department.”

Dr. Henderson, who has been at Mass General since he arrived in 1989 as a Psychiatry resident, is an associate professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Like Dr. Pierce, Dr. Henderson leads many vital efforts to serve the neediest populations, and holds concurrent positions as the medical director for the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma and the associate director of the MGH Schizophrenia Program. He is a leading authority on the effects of antipsychotic medications on weight gain, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.



Associate chief of Psychiatry, Gregory L. Fricchione, MD, teaches psychosomatic medicine to psychiatry residents of Addis Ababa University’s Amanuel Psychiatric Hospital. Training of mental health workers is a priority of the MGH Pierce Global Psychiatry Division, given the acute shortage of trained professionals in many countries. Dr. Fricchione notes that Ethiopia has only 22 psychiatrists and 148 psychiatric nurses for 80 million people.

Massachusetts General Hospital Brings Psychiatric Care to War-Torn Liberia

LIBERIA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM was once the envy of its African neighbors. Now, the West African nation has virtually no healthcare infrastructure as a result of two decades of brutal civil war. Liberia's mortality rates for infants and children under the age of five are among the highest in the world. UNICEF has reported that more than 15 percent of Liberian children die before reaching their first birthday.

During the country's protracted civil war, Liberians experienced profound losses and witnessed gruesome acts of violence. Child soldiers, trafficking of children, rape, and sex slavery were among the horrific consequences of the wars. While the psychological effects on Liberians have not yet been fully quantified, research from similar conflict-ridden areas of the world shows a high incidence of mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse. With an estimated population of 3.5 million in 2005, Liberia had less than one psychiatrist for every 100,000 people, compared with 14 per 100,000 in the U.S., according to World Health Organization and Liberian government data. With the help of a Mass General/Harvard team led by David C. Henderson, MD, director of the Chester M. Pierce, MD, Global Psychiatry Division at Mass General, and Richard Mollica, MD, and colleagues in the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma at Mass General, Liberia is now planning to build capacity to provide mental health care.

PLANNING ON A FAST TRACK

In January 2009, the McCall MacBain Foundation of Geneva, Switzerland, awarded a grant to the Pierce Global Psychiatry Division to join with the Liberian Mental Health Policy Committee, Ministry of Health, to develop a comprehensive clinical care plan for the nation. The MGH team's assignment was to work with Liberian colleagues to identify culturally appropriate, evidence-based, equitable, and cost-effective models of mental health care and delivery.

"The MGH Department of Psychiatry has tremendous intellectual resources to improve the capacity of countries struggling to care for suffering citizens ... Liberia represents both an opportunity as well as an obligation."

— David C. Henderson, MD

In conducting the assessment of Liberia's mental health care needs, the Mass General team visited healthcare facilities throughout the country and conducted detailed surveys. "When we arrived at each location, the primary objective was to listen," recalls Dr. Henderson. "We knew we had to start where people are, with whatever means they use to relieve distress, including traditional healers." The most common psychiatric conditions the team identified were post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, seizures and substance abuse.

Six months later, Dr. Henderson and his team reported their findings, which contained four key recommendations: integrating mental health care with primary care; making treatment available locally; providing special services for at-risk populations; and conducting intensive training for mental health professionals. Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the country's legislature accepted the recommendations in September, and officials are now seeking funding for wide-scale implementation.

"The MGH Department of Psychiatry has tremendous intellectual resources to improve the capacity of countries struggling to care for suffering citizens," says Dr. Henderson. "Psychiatry can't be considered exempt from the responsibility to contribute to current global needs. Liberia represents both an opportunity as well as an obligation."



Dr. Mardia Stone, *left*, Yale University-Clinton Foundation senior fellow in health care management to the Liberian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; Dr. Reiner Merkel, *background*, psychologist and medical director of E.S. Grant Hospital in the capital city, Monrovia; James Lavelle, LICSW, *third from right*, co-founder of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma at Mass General; and Dr. David C. Henderson, *right*, planning team leader and new director of the Chester M. Pierce, MD Global Psychiatry Division, with staff counselors at the hospital.