Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at University of Miami Hospital

South Florida’s most advanced medical care.
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

The psychiatry service at the University of Miami Hospital is led by Charles B. Nemeroff, M.D., Ph.D., Leonard M. Miller Professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Dr. Nemeroff is a nationally renowned clinician and researcher and a member of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine. This Department leads the many medical schools in the state of Florida in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding and in the broad provision of psychiatric services available for the treatment of major mental disorders. There are 90 inpatient beds in psychiatry at the University of Miami Hospital. In the past two years, the Department has recruited 30 new faculty, who together with the already excellent faculty in the Department and a compliment of private practice psychiatrists represent leaders in the diagnosis and treatment of depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, autism, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Alzheimer’s disease and anxiety disorders including post traumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. A broad range of psychotherapies are available in addition to state-of-the-art psychopharmacology.

Charles B. Nemeroff, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine and Director, Center on Aging

Specialized Treatment Center for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Faculty from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences are currently collaborating with the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery in an effort to service the community by providing comprehensive assessment for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder – OCD.

For referrals or information about OCD treatment, medications, psychotherapy and Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) please contact: Clara Alvarez, M.D., Psychiatry, 305-355-9028, CAVillalba@med.miami.edu.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a neuropsychiatric disorder with a lifetime prevalence of approximately 2%, and a high incidence of chronic and marked disability. It is the fourth most common neuropsychiatric illness, and affects 1 in 40 adults and 1 in 200 children. Individuals with OCD suffer recurrent subjective distress, along with impairment in social or occupational functioning. OCD is characterized by recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses and images that are intrusive and cause marked anxiety (obsessions), as well as repetitive behaviors such as, hand washing or checking or counting that the person feels driven to perform in response to the obsessions.
TREATMENTS
Many patients suffering with OCD can be treated effectively with a combination of medication and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT); however, a minority of such patients cannot find adequate relief from these available interventions and are resistant to conventional treatments. Recently, newer methods of treating these individuals suffering from chronic, severe, treatment-resistant OCD symptoms have been demonstrated to have promising therapeutic effects.

Deep Brain Stimulation
Over the last decade and through the use of modern advances in brain imaging, the neurocircuitry implicated in OCD has become increasingly understood. Most recently the FDA approved a procedure called Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) for the treatment of severe OCD as a Humanitarian Device. DBS is as an alternative to anterior capsulotomy for the treatment of chronic, severe, treatment-resistant obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) in patients who have not responded to conventional treatments.

This procedure involves the placement of an electrical stimulator to deep areas of the brain allowing for significant improvement in symptoms. It is similar to a pacemaker for the heart. Although large prospective randomized trials have not been performed yet, smaller studies have shown notable efficacy. Patients can expect up to 60% improvement in symptoms after surgery. Not all patients are candidates for this procedure. At the University of Miami, a multidisciplinary team comprised of Psychiatrists, Neurologists, Neuropsychologists, and Neurosurgeons evaluate prospective patients to determine their eligibility. Additionally, advanced imaging and state-of-the-art targeting computers are used to produce the most effective clinical outcomes for each patient.

Psychiatry Services at the University of Miami Hospital

MOOD DISORDERS UNIT
The University of Miami Hospital has the only specialized mood disorders unit in South Florida. The Mood Disorders Unit has 14 private rooms dedicated to the treatment of depressive disorders, bipolar disorders and anxiety disorders.

Each patient participates in a detailed evaluation immediately after admission and based on our findings, the treatment team develops an individualized treatment plan. The evaluation includes state-of-the-art laboratory testing, brain imaging and neuropsychological testing. The unit offers a comprehensive physician led therapeutic approach by combining cutting edge pharmacological management with innovative psychotherapeutic services. The nationally recognized faculty of the University of Miami Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, with subspecialty expertise in a variety of mood and anxiety disorders, is available for consultation. The unit psychologist leads our psychotherapeutic efforts, which include process groups, cognitive behavioral therapy groups, psychoeducation groups as well as individual therapy sessions. The emphasis is on evidence based treatment modalities. In addition, our recreational therapist offers new therapeutic approaches that include creative writing and drawing, journalism and others.

The unit promotes healing with an environment where support, understanding and compassion are essential elements. Our goal is to provide excellent quality of care to improve the acute symptoms of mood disorders. Our caring and professional group of doctors, psychologists, recreational therapists, nurses and technical staff will be attentive to all your needs and will ensure that your treatment goals are met. As an academic medical center, the team includes psychiatric residents and medical students.

We welcome patients who have been considered treatment resistant and we provide additional services such as Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) and Deep Brain Stimulation Therapy in collaboration with our colleagues in neurosurgery and neurology, for patients with refractory obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and depression.
CLINICAL TEAM

Edmi Cortes, M.D. is Assistant Professor and Chief of Inpatient Psychiatry at the University of Miami Hospital. She is board certified in Adult and Forensic Psychiatry.

Martin Strassnig, M.D. is Assistant Professor and Chief of the Electroconvulsive Therapy Service (ECT) at the University of Miami Hospital.

Maria Lopez, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor and an NIH funded investigator, who specializes in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT).

OTHER INPATIENT SERVICES

In addition to the Mood Disorders Unit, the UMH Psychiatry Department has three other inpatient psychiatry units with a total of 76 private rooms. These units are dedicated to the treatment of a variety of psychiatric disorders, including acute Psychotic Disorders, such as Schizophrenia, Impulse Control Disorders and Personality Disorders. In addition to the University of Miami faculty, several excellent private practice psychiatrists admit to these units.
Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is one of the most effective treatments for severe depression and helpful in certain other disorders, particularly when a patient has failed medication or requires a rapid improvement in symptoms. ECT is believed to work by electrically stimulating the brain and improving the release of neurochemicals known to be important in the treatment of psychiatric disorders.

Upon considering ECT as a treatment option, a thorough evaluation is completed by a team of University of Miami psychiatrists with expertise in ECT. They are assisted by consultants from other specialties including cardiology, neurology, and anesthesiology, as needed. By integrating this information, we provide a comprehensive assessment, and recommendations regarding clinical care.

ECT has undergone rapid evidence-based technical improvements since it was first introduced over 70 years ago. This also allows us to individualize ECT to each patient’s needs by selecting treatment parameters that research has shown have the lowest risk of side effects while offering the greatest possible benefits.

UMH offers ECT services both on an inpatient and outpatient basis. Facilities are located within the main UMH teaching hospital, which provides prospective ECT patients with a wealth of expertise from highly trained medical specialists and assures high-quality care.

Dr. Martin Strassnig, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, directs the ECT service and brings with him extensive clinical and research experience in the treatment of severe and/or treatment resistant psychiatric illness. A core team of dedicated ECT clinicians provides skilled support.

All members of the ECT treatment team have been specifically trained and certified in this specialty.

Eating Disorders Program

The University of Miami Eating Disorders Program provides comprehensive treatment for adults, 16 years or older, struggling with anorexia (AN), bulimia (BN) and other eating disorders. Located in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, we offer comprehensive evaluations, treatment planning, and ongoing care for patients with eating disorders. Through our Inpatient Treatment, Day Treatment and Intensive Outpatient programs, we offer state-of-the-art treatments for patients with all levels of eating disorder pathology. Our staff is comprised of a team of professionals that specialize in the treatment of eating disorders which includes: psychiatrists, internal medicine experts, psychologists, master-level therapists, psychiatric residents and registered dietitians.
INPATIENT TREATMENT PROGRAM
The inpatient program involves admission to a 24-hour in-hospital medical-psychiatric unit located in the University of Miami Hospital (UMH). This facility includes beds that are dedicated solely to the treatment of eating disorders though additional patients can be accommodated. The inpatient program provides a structured and supportive environment tailored to help patients through the challenging stages of re-nutrition. Components of the program include:

• Admission to a specialized eating disorder unit
• Coordinated medical and psychiatric treatment by a psychiatrist and internal medicine physician
• Daily consultation with a psychiatrist
• Medical monitoring
• Coordinated care from an interdisciplinary team of experts including: nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, dieters, and other specialists.
• Consultation to specialty services as needed including: gastroenterology, cardiology, neurology, and other medical specialties at UMH
• Coordinated transition to the Day Treatment Program on the UM medical campus
• Nutritional assessment and comprehensive refeeding plan

DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM
The Day Treatment program is recommended for individuals who have successfully completed the inpatient program or who are medically stable and require a more structured environment than a traditional outpatient setting. The Day Treatment focuses on relapse-prevention and successful transition to home and outpatient follow-up care. This program is fully integrated with the inpatient program and is staffed by the same psychiatrists and psychologists as the inpatient team. Components of the program include:

• Six hour/day treatment Monday through Friday
• Two therapeutic meals daily
• Individual therapy and psycho education
• Individual nutritional planning and ongoing monitoring
• Therapeutic process groups, CBT-E groups and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills groups focusing on eating disorder issues
• Medical and pharmacological management
• Once weekly caregiver support group

INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT PROGRAM
The outpatient program is designed for individuals that are currently in outpatient therapy and need additional comprehensive treatment with meal support options or as a step down from Day Treatment. Outpatient therapy is intended for those individuals who are ready to overcome their eating disorder in their everyday life, but need continued support from a multidisciplinary treatment team. The program is offered two nights per week and the components include:

• Two therapeutic meals per week
• Nutritional therapy
• Group therapy
• Once weekly caregiver support group
• Comprehensive coordination and treatment recommendations to current outpatient providers

CLINICAL TEAM

Lauren Ozbolt, M.D. is Assistant Professor and Medical Director of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Eating Disorders Program.

Ingrid Barrera, Psy.D. is Assistant Professor and head psychologist of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Eating Disorders Program.

Judi M. Woolger, M.D. is Co-Director Executive Medicine Program, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

A wide variety of outpatient services are available from the more than 100 faculty of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.
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