

Educating Through Research

Research is critical to better treatments and understanding of childhood and adolescent mental illnesses. The AACAP offers many research opportunities and disseminates research findings. Our support of young investigators introduces a new generation of scientific discovery. Some of 2006's highlights in research are as follows:

Substance Abuse Disorder

Half of American secondary school students have tried an illegal drug by the time they reach high school graduation, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse's (NIDA) Monitoring the Future Study. This is why the AACAP promotes research in drug and alcohol addiction, an area where research is desperately needed. The AACAP seeks to give investigators an understanding of the causes of substance abuse in order to prevent its devastation. At its 53rd Annual Meeting in San Diego, the AACAP hosted a full day program, seven symposia, and 18 new research posters on youth substance abuse, more than ever before.

To continue to increase the number of young investigators, the AACAP has partnered with the NIDA to form the K12 Physician Scientist Program in Substance Abuse led by **Paula Riggs, M.D.**, and Stacia Hall, AACAP Director of Research, Training, and Education. The program supports research careers and mentoring for five outstanding junior faculty members. Each is supported for five years, through grants of about \$1 million per trainee.

Last year, the AACAP gauged program participants' progress at the annual K12 Retreat. Together, the current trainees have presented seven research posters, 13 oral presentations, co-authored five peer-reviewed publications, and prepared eight first-authored manuscripts for submission to peer-reviewed journals. Their work includes research into the high prevalence of attentional disorders among teens with substance abuse disorder, HIV, and traumas linked to substance abuse, and the differences and commonalities among adolescents who use different substances. Their high record of achievement reflects a heightened understanding of the roots of addiction and how to better help individuals tap into resilience.

Pediatric Bipolar Disorder

In 2006, the AACAP convened a research forum to foster the exchange of knowledge on this real, pervasive, and often debilitating mental illness. Sponsored by the AACAP's Work Group on Research and chaired by **Robert L. Findling, M.D.**, **Gabrielle Carlson, M.D.**, and **Robert Post, M.D.**, the 2006



Research Forum examined recovery rates and charted differences and similarities among those living with pediatric bipolar disorder to examine why some individuals with the illness have better outcomes. More than 120 physicians attended the sold-out program. These physicians' improved understanding of bipolar disorder will benefit families by helping more children and adolescents receive the treatment they need.

Attentional Disorders

For the past 13 years, the AACAP's Elaine Schlosser Lewis Award Fund (ESL), created by **Owen Lewis, M.D.**, has provided child and adolescent psychiatrists with pathways to research attention-deficit disorder (ADD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and learning disabilities. Since 1994,

the ESL Fund has awarded more than 20 grants totaling more than \$120,000 to further understanding of attentional disorders. The award is named after Dr. Lewis's mother, Elaine Schlosser Lewis, a special education teacher.

In December, the seventh annual ESL Luncheon was held in New York City through the generous sponsorship of Susan Mendik and Claire Edersheim, long time ESL Fund supporters. **Bennett L. Leventhal, M.D.**, spoke about the fundamentals of attentional disorders and the importance of teaming with parents. **Todd Levine, M.D.**, winner of the 2006 ESL Pilot Research Award for Learning Disabilities, and 2006 ESL Journal Award winner **Margaret Weiss, M.D., Ph.D.**, outlined their goals of minimizing attentional disorders' negative effects by helping patients better manage their symptoms.

Opening Doors to Diversity

A roadblock to ideal treatment is the lack of cultural diversity among child and adolescent psychiatrists. To address this, the AACAP supports programs that increase the representation of minority child and adolescent psychiatrists, both in research and clinical practice.

In 2006, the AACAP Jeanne Spurlock Minority Medical Student Clinical Fellowship, supported by the Center for Mental Health Services, enabled 14 medical students to explore careers in child and adolescent

psychiatry, gain valuable work experience, and consult with leaders in child and adolescent psychiatry.

In addition, the AACAP Jeanne Spurlock Minority Medical Student Research Fellowship in Drug Abuse and Addiction, supported by NIDA, sponsors minority medical students' exploration of substance abuse related to child and adolescent psychiatry. Named after **Jeanne Spurlock, M.D.**, an eminent child and adolescent psychiatrist who fought to open doors for colleagues of diverse backgrounds, the award honors individuals who have made contributions in advancing civil rights, social welfare, public information, scientific research, education, and mentoring.

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