UF out front in latest Seminars in Neurology

Christopher Hess, M.D., (pictured at right) and neurology chair Michael Okun, M.D., served as guest editors of a new issue of Seminars in Neurology. The issue, titled "Update on Parkinson's Disease," includes articles on management of Parkinson's and future directions of research.

UF neurologists and biomedical engineers were key contributors to the issue. Among the 13 articles are:

- "Recognizing Atypical Parkinsonisms: 'Red Flags' and Therapeutic Approaches" by Hess and Nikolaus McFarland, M.D., Ph.D.
- "Current Practice and the Future of Deep Brain Stimulation Therapy in Parkinson's Disease" by Hess; Okun; Leonardo Almeida, M.D.; Wissam Deeb, M.D.; Chauncey Spears, M.D.; graduate research assistants Enrico Opri and Rene Molina; Daniel Martinez-Ramirez, M.D.; and Aysegul Gunduz, Ph.D.
- "The Phenomenology of Parkinson’s Disease" by Hess and Mark Hallett, M.D., senior investigator at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
- "Botulinum Toxin Therapy for Parkinson's Disease" by Aparna Wagle Shukla, M.D., and Irene Malaty, M.D.
- "Motor Complications of Dopaminergic Medications in Parkinson's Disease" by Hess and University of Toronto faculty members Maria Eliza Freitas, M.D., and Susan H. Fox, MB ChB.

Congrats DARPA team!

A team of MBI neuroscientists led by UF biomedical engineer Kevin Otto, Ph.D., has won an award up to $4.2 million under DARPA's Targeted Neuroplasticity Training program.

Team members Jen Bizon, Ph.D.; Sara Burke, Ph.D.; Damon Lamb, Ph.D.; Drew Maurer, Ph.D.; and Barry Setlow, Ph.D. — from UF’s departments of neuroscience and psychiatry and the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center — will work to identify which neural pathways in the brain are activated by vagus nerve stimulation and how this approach can be used to enhance cognition.

The overarching goal of TNT program is to find ways to speed up cognitive skills training for linguists, intelligence analysts and cryptographers. Read more about UF’s two awards here.
A stand-out stroke team

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association honored the UF Health Shands Comprehensive Stroke Center with its Get With The Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus performance award. The center is nationally certified by The Joint Commission. Congratulations to the center on its sixth consecutive award!

Podcast people

MBI deputy director Steven DeKosky, M.D., neurology chair Michael Okun, M.D., and neurology vice chair Michael Jaffee, M.D., recently appeared as guests on three different podcasts:

The Curbsiders, April 3 edition, "The dementia episode you won't forget"

Harvesting Happiness, "News from the front: Solving the puzzle of living with Parkinson's with Dr. Michael Okun and Mileha Soneji"

Neurology Podcast (official weekly podcast of the American Academy of Neurology), April 18 edition, "Epidemiology and Prognosis of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury in Returning Soldiers: A Cohort Study"
Work by Duane Mitchell, M.D., Ph.D., was featured as the peer-reviewed medical highlight on the Defense Department's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs website. The piece details adoptive cellular therapy to target recurrent brain cancers.

Fear Facers Day Camp

The UF psychiatry department and the Center for OCD, Anxiety and Related Disorders, or COARD, at UF are hosting a camp for children who have obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorder, panic disorder or a specific phobia.

Carol Mathews, M.D., the medical director of the camp, said that similar camps have been done before but this is the first of its kind in North Florida, to her knowledge.

She said COARD and the psychiatry department decided to have the camp because it will help children face their fears in an environment that supports them.

“Having a summer camp gives the kids an opportunity to get more intensive care while having a fun, summer camp experience,” she said.

The OCD and anxiety disorders camp, which will be held at Veterans Memorial Park in Gainesville, is for children ages 8 to 15, and will run July 24 to Aug. 4. The day camp will counsel 12 children for each of the two one-week blocks, for a total of up to 24 children in the two weeks. Children may attend for one or two weeks. For more information, or to register, please call 352-265-4623.

The camp will be staffed by psychologists and psychology trainees who have experience treating OCD and anxiety disorders, Mathews said. It will also be run by experienced counselors and will offer outdoor activities, crafts and projects.

“We hope that the kids who participate will be able to conquer their fears and learn some tools for continuing to face their fears after they go home,” she said. “We also hope that the community around us becomes more aware of the frequency of OCD and anxiety disorders in kids, and learns that effective treatments are available.”

--by Isaac Heller

JAMA Neurology features DeKosky editorial

In an editorial in the May issue of JAMA Neurology, MBI deputy director Steven T. DeKosky, M.D., writes in response to the reporting of outcomes of the Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease by Vitamin E and Selenium (PREADViSE) clinical trial.
DBS vs. focused ultrasound: AAN debate with Dr. Okun

MedPage Today recently featured a debate that took place at the American Academy of Neurology meeting in April, with UF neurology chair Michael Okun, M.D., and University of Maryland neurologist Paul Fishman, M.D., Ph.D., facing off on DBS versus focused ultrasound. Okun pointed out the downsides of FUS while Fishman took the "pro" side.

Congrats to the Brain Tumor Immunotherapy Program!

Catherine Flores, Ph.D., has won a $200,000 grant from the American Brain Tumor Association for her study, “Evaluating the use of hematopoietic stem cells in overcoming immunosuppression within the brain tumor microenvironment.”

Elias Sayour, M.D., Ph.D., has won a $50,000 grant from the Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research for his work with RNA-nanoparticle vaccines. The grant is among 35 research projects across the country being funded with more than $2 million in awards from Rally.

Honoring "Dr. C"

On the second annual memorial and advocacy day to honor the late Richard C. Christensen, M.D., who selflessly served the homeless for 25 years, numerous members of the psychiatry community gathered on the University of Florida campus April 28 to remember their friend, co-worker and mentor. Read the story here.

MBI news to share?

Michelle Jaffee coordinates communications for the MBI. Contact her at michelle.jaffee@ufl.edu.

Friend on Facebook  Follow on Twitter  Watch on YouTube