Letter from the President
Gayna Havens, PhD

I’m very pleased and honored to be serving as the current president of the Addiction Division of NYSPA. And I want to thank our past president, Bryan Fallon, PhD, for the wonderful and steady work he did during the past year. Among other things, his leadership allowed us to put together another well-attended conference this past November, which explored the interplay between trauma and addiction. We already have several exciting ideas for our next conference, and are in the early planning stages. We will keep you informed when a date is established for the next conference.

With the change of the administration at the national level, we have noticed some excitement about what this may bring to the field of working with individuals with addictions. Andrew Tatarsky, PhD, took a characteristically active role and drafted a letter to President Obama urging him to appoint a Drug Czar that has a record of supporting legislation that advocates treatment innovation and sentencing reform. Dr. Tatarsky’s letter received significant circulation and recognition. Gil Kerlikowske, the Police Chief of Seattle, was confirmed as the new drug czar. Mr. Kerlikowske is known as someone who allows needle exchange programs and supports drug treatment for low-level offenders as an alternative to prison. And more recently, President Obama named Thomas McLellan, PhD, to the post of Deputy Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Dr. McLellan is a prominent researcher who is expected to bring this important voice to the dialogue. (Division members may remember that Dr. McLellan was the invited speaker at our 2006 conference.)

Dr. Tatarsky has also spearheaded the circulation of a letter to President Obama regarding the choice of a director of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). We have included the letter in this issue of our Newsletter in an effort to spark discussion, debate and action.

There have also been recent changes in our own state of New York. The legislative leaders in Albany recently announced that they had reached an agreement to repeal the mandatory sentencing laws, or the Rockefeller laws, for low-level drug offenders. This would allow judges the discretion to send people to treatment instead of prison when the situation warrants this course of action. The plan still needs to be approved by the Assembly and the Senate, but is expected to allow judges to send first-time nonviolent offenders who plead guilty to drug charges to treatment. If treatment were not successfully completed, the judge would then have the option of imposing a prison sentence.

On to even more local news, I know that the entire Executive Committee joins me in congratulating Debra Rothschild, PhD on the publication of her article, co-authored with Melinda Gellman, PhD,
in the January issue of the Journal of Addictive Diseases. The article is entitled, “Finding the Common Ground: Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Substance Abuse Treatment.” Drs. Rothschild and Gellman based this paper on their workshop at our conference in 2006. They explore the history of the schism between psychoanalysis and substance abuse treatment, and how, in fact, they can quite effectively be brought into alignment with one another. I hope you will make it a point to get a copy of Dr. Rothschild’s excellent article, and explore the fascinating interface between psychoanalysis and substance abuse treatment. And, please let us know of other articles that are being published by our members so we can share them with the Division through our newsletter.

One excellent way to remain in touch with the activities of the Executive Committee and other colleagues is to join the Addiction Division listserv. In order to join, you must send an e-mail to imailsrv@nyspa.org. In the body of the e-mail you need four elements: subscribe, addicdiv, your first name, your last name. Once you are a member of the listserv, you post by sending an e-mail to addicdiv@nyspa.org. We encourage everyone to join the listserv as it is an important way to establish and maintain contact with other psychologists who have an interest and expertise in working with individuals with addictions and co-occurring disorders.

I welcome comments, suggestions, requests and news or articles that you would like to have included in the next newsletter. Please feel free to contact me directly at gaynahavens@rcn.com. We want to continue learning how we can better advance our Division as well as the field of treating those with addictions.

Regards,
Gayna Havens

Addiction Division Co-Sponsors Syringe Injection Facility Conference

On May 22, 2009 a conference on the creation of a syringe injection facility (SIF) in New York City was held at John Jay College. Primarily organized by Dr. Bart Majoor of St. Ann’s Corner of Harm Reduction and the Intravenous Drug Users Health Alliance, the NYSPA Division on Addictions became an early co-sponsor of the event.

Inspired by models in Sydney, Australia, and Vancouver, British Columbia, the goal is to create safe spaces where injection drug users can go to use their drugs. The intentions of these kinds of program include: (1) preventing users from overdosing and dying from the use of opiates and other substances; (2) educating users on safer and healthier ways to use substances in order to protect them from injury and disease; and (3) creating connections and relationships with users that would eventually serve to facilitate their engagement with some kind of healing or recovery process.

Of note, studies in Sydney found that SIF attendees included a significant number of individuals who had no prior history with any kind of addiction treatment – including needle exchange. This means that this kind of facility could help attract drug-using individuals who have not been reached before.

Expressing his gratitude for our assistance, Dr. Majoor said, "The Injection Drug User Health Alliance is grateful for the donation from the New York Psychological Association Division of Addictions supporting the conference on ‘Safe Injection Facilities in New York’.”

We were happy to have the opportunity to play a small role in facilitating the dialogue around this important, if controversial, form of addiction treatment.

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Comings and Goings

The Division on Addictions Executive Committee was sad to accept the resignation of long-time member, **Marlene Reil, PhD**. Marlene started off as the student representative and then became a full member after receiving her degree. She is currently doing very important work on the interface of addiction and mental health for the City of New York. We wish her well in all of her endeavors.

The Division on Addictions Executive Committee is, simultaneously, experiencing an abundance of riches with the addition of three outstanding Clinical Psychologists. Our new board members include:

**Frances Melendez, PhD** – Dr. Melendez is the Clinical Director for Iris House, a treatment program that is dedicated to serving individuals, families, and communities impacted by HIV/AIDS and addiction.

**Sarah Church, PhD** – Dr. Church is the Director of the Division of Substance Abuse at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. The Division is the largest addiction treatment program in Bronx County and provides comprehensive substance abuse, psychiatric and medical treatment to over 3,500 patients annually at five community based locations in underserved sections of the Bronx.

**David Lane, PsyD** – Dr. Lane is clinical director of the recently opened Westchester branch of the Center for Motivation & Change, a private group practice of substance abuse psychologists who work exclusively with evidence-based practices. Dr. Lane is also a staff psychologist at CMC’s Manhattan office.

We are confident that the leadership of our Division will be greatly strengthened by the wisdom and creativity of these outstanding psychologists.

Press Release Regarding Sign-On Letter to President Obama About Leadership at SAMHSA

Dozens of prominent substance use and mental health treatment and research professionals urge President Obama to break with recent administrations and appoint a professional with expertise in the science of substance use, mental health and public health to direct the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

They urge the President to appoint a leader to SAMSHA who supports evidence-based and theoretically sound treatments and will make decisions based on science rather than ideology and politics.

To fix SAMHSA’s chronic dysfunction, strong scientific and professional credentials are seen as key to insure that the agency’s $3.3 million budget is best spent to effectively address the treatment and prevention of mental illness and addiction.

The past two decades have seen dramatic scientific advances in understanding mental illness and addiction which have led to the development of effective treatments and prevention programs. Unfortunately, these treatments are not reaching the vast majority of the public who need them. It is noted that the United States spends about $120 billion on behavioral health care but a government review of SAMHSA, the agency responsible for overseeing this area of healthcare, rated the agency’s programs as largely ineffective and that much more could be accomplished with this money. Only 1 out of every 4 of these dollars is spent on evidence-based care with the rest going toward treatments and programs of questionable value. Many politicians including Congressman and Senators who sit on relevant oversight committees have never heard of SAMSHA, despite the fact that SAMSHA is on the same organizational level in the Public Health Service as CDC and FDA.
One major reason for SAMHSA obscurity and dysfunction has been the failure to appoint a person with significant scientific and professional expertise to lead the agency. Past administrators have been drawn from the ranks of state government with experience in community action, but without recognized high level scientific mental health, addiction, and public health expertise. These professionals say that it is essential to have the highest caliber professional leading the agency in the fight to improve the lives of all those who struggle with mental health problems and the consequences of substance abuse and to assure that government money works for the benefit of all Americans. They call on the Obama transition team to appoint a professional with a national reputation of excellence as a scientist and innovator in implementing science-based and theoretically sound mental health, addiction and public health programs in communities.

To view the letter and view the list of signatories, go to: www.andrewtatarsky.com/samhsaletter

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