ISE POISED FOR ACTION

These are exciting times at the Institute on Social Exclusion (ISE). Already engaged in a variety of applied research, public awareness, and community outreach projects, the ISE has launched a three-year agenda that will result in significant contributions being made to the development of American mental health policy. Although each emerged independently from the other, the ISE’s scheduled programming is aligned with and complementary to statutory proposals and legislative amendments now pending before the U.S. Congress.

Especially remarkable is the congruency existing between the Institute’s plan to form, convene, and work with a Social Determinants of Mental Health (SDoMH) Working Group tasked with creating a mental health impact assessment (MHIA) tool. As described more fully elsewhere in this article, one proposed Act (S. 1679), which is presently awaiting floor consideration, seeks to implement a health impact assessment (HIA) that would take into account the likely psychological and social consequences of federal projects.

Thus, the centerpiece of the ISE’s long-term strategy focuses on an idea that currently constitutes an important feature of President Obama’s health care reform package.

Scholarship of Integration

A central component of the Adler School’s scholarship of integration, the ISE promotes action-oriented learning, develops conceptual models reflecting cross-sectoral concerns, and forms collaborative alliances with foundations, other academic institutions, governmental/non-governmental organizations, and community partners to bring the concept of social exclusion and its related components to the forefront of the American public policy discourse.

Promoting Multidisciplinarity

Eschewing the disciplinary silos that impede cross-professional cooperation, the ISE reflects a commitment to fostering dialogue among individuals and organizations operating in a diversity of fields. Indeed, multidisciplinarity is one of the hallmarks of the Institute’s work.

Led by Director Lynn C. Todman, PhD, an urban planner, the Institute’s faculty team represents an amalgam of inter-related professional expertise. Faculty Fellow Sherrod Taylor, JD, a trial lawyer, advocated on behalf of persons with traumatic brain injury and other neurological conditions for 28 years before coming to the Adler School. Faculty Affiliate Janna Henning, JD, PsyD, an expert in traumatic stress and thanatology, practiced corporate law prior to accepting a position at Adler. Faculty Affiliate Kerry Cochrane, MA, MSW, the Director of Library Services, previously worked on community development issues, and now maintains a small, private social work practice. Additionally, roughly 20 graduate students from varying backgrounds comprise a team of research and teaching assistants helping to accomplish the Institute’s goals.

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO), policy makers, practitioners, and other professionals from a variety of disciplines have begun to direct more attention to the social conditions that exert powerful influences on health. Often called the social determinants of health (SDOH), these societal structures may cause or exacerbate many serious physical health conditions—e.g., cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma, obesity, or diabetes. Despite the wide use of the concept to understand the causes of physical illnesses, the SDOH frame has rarely been used to inform our understanding of mental illness.

Social Determinants of Mental Health (SDoMH)

Recognizing that social conditions profoundly impact mental health, the ISE has begun to study how those social conditions – i.e., the social determinants of mental health (SDoMH) - influence psychological well-being.
Like myriad other factors that deny certain groups of people the opportunity to participate mainstream life, resulting in social exclusion, the Social Determinants of Mental Health (SDoMH) can undermine the health of communities.

By advocating for prevention and intervention activities that are informed by the SDoMH frame, and by identifying and addressing, through multidisciplinary collaborations, those conditions in the social environment that precipitate poor mental health outcomes, the Institute strives to become a powerful resource for policy makers, public service providers, researchers, and other professionals, as well as the general public.

International Conference

An important step toward accomplishing the ISE’s long-term agenda will occur on June 3–4, 2010 when it hosts an international conference, entitled “Social Determinants of Mental Health: From Awareness to Action.” This gathering will bring together people and organizations committed to using the SDoMH framework to inform the wide array of policies, programs, decisions and actions that impact mental health. The conference will feature two keynote addresses, a panel discussion, and scholarly papers that present information about the SDoMH.

The keynote speaker on June 3rd will be David Satcher, MD, PhD – the 16th Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Satcher was also a member of WHO’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health and a Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He is now the Director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute and the Poussaint-Satcher-Crosby Chair in Mental Health at the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Dr. Satcher will be followed on the program by a panel of distinguished public health experts, who will respond to his remarks and comment on how the SDoMH model may be operationalized in the policy and program development/implementation arena.

The panelists include: Gail C. Christopher, PhD, Vice President for Programs, Food, Health and Well-Being, The Kellogg Foundation; Aida Giachello, PhD, Director, Midwest Latino Health Research, Training & Policy Center, University of Illinois at Chicago; Terry Mason, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Cook County Health System (Metropolitan Chicago); and Aaron Wernham, MD, Project Director, Health Impact Project, Pew Health Group, The Pew Charitable Trusts. The panel will be moderated by Marian McDonald, DrPH, MPH, MA (Moderator), Associate Director for Minority and Women’s Health, DEISS/NCEZID, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On June 4th, the keynote speaker will be Sandro Galea, MD, PhD, DrPH, who is Gelman Professor and Chair of Epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. Dr. Galea will present the results of his research, which seeks to uncover how determinants at multiple levels of influence - including policies, features of the social environment, and molecular and genetic factors - jointly produce the health of populations.

On both conference days, presentations will be made by a group of carefully selected respondents to an international Call for Papers issued by the ISE. These presentations will bridge professional and disciplinary perspectives, demonstrate pathways by which social conditions influence mental health, and describe/propose prevention and intervention plans based upon the SDoMH model. Subsequent to the conference, the proceedings of the breakout presentations and an online video of the keynote addresses will be produced and distributed to the conference attendees and the general public.

The conference is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Social Determinants of Mental Health Working Group

Immediately after the conference, the ISE will convene a Social Determinants of Mental Health Working Group that will be charged with the task of developing a SDoMH Impact Assessment (IA) tool that can be used to forecast, evaluate, and monitor the impact of policies, programs, projects, and other decisions affecting the social determinants of mental health. The information derived from the IA may be used to mitigate risk factors and enhance protective factors to ensure good mental health and well-being. The work of the SDoMH will also increase awareness about the social structural origins of mental illness, enhance public engagement in mental health policy making and program development, and increase communication and collaboration among diverse stakeholders concerned about the impacts on mental health of specific decisions and activities.

Encouraging New Public Policies

Recognizing that governments are the ultimate guardians of a nation’s mental health, the ISE remains keenly interested in encouraging legislation and public policies that promote psychological well-being. The capacity to determine prospectively the probable ramifications of projects, programs, and policies on the social determinants of community mental health – especially any impacts upon disadvantaged or vulnerable populations – is therefore very important.

It now appears that the ISE’s SDoMH Working Group may have an early opportunity to take advantage of new laws requiring mental health impact assessments, as part of health care reform legislation now pending before Congress.

One bill, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), would establish the concept of health impact assessments (HIAs) within the fabric of American law. If enacted, the legislation would require that future federal policies take into account not only the health impacts of the “physical environment” but also the “psychological and social” environments, as well. That bill (S.1679) has attracted the special attention of the ISE because its provisions mirror language used in an earlier proposal made by President Obama during the 109th Congress when he was Democratic Senator from Illinois.

Given the foundation established over the course of the last year, the ISE now stands ready to offer input on that legislation. Incorporating the roles of social and psychological environments into consideration of population health is needed to eliminate legal issues created when the U.S. Supreme handed down its decision in Metropolitan Edison Co. v. People Against Nuclear Energy, 460 U.S. 766, 772 (1983). In that case, the court rejected the notion that the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) required consideration of psychological health. That decision, which is generally considered to be adverse to the development of HIAs in this country, remains a binding source of legal authority and was followed recently in a California federal trial court. San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority v. Salazar, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 45113 (2009).

Moreover, a policy discussion, spawned by the ISE and its allied SDoMH Working Group, dealing with the development of mental health impact assessment tools (MIAs) and, ultimately, mental health itself, could furnish the impetus required to help ensure the use of evidence-based positions in future health care reform laws. For these reasons, the anticipated projects of the ISE, and its working group, appear warranted.

Conclusion

The activities described in this article, along with the many other actions now being considered by the Institute on Social Exclusion, signal the continuing development of the ISE as an agent of positive social change in America.
Neglected Infections of Poverty Update

Over the course of the past year, the Institute on Social Exclusion (ISE) helped to bring national attention to the Neglected Infections of Poverty (NIP). The issue was first brought to light by Dr. Peter Hotez, who is Chair of the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, & Tropical Medicine at George Washington University Medical Center and President of the Sabin Vaccine Institute at George Washington University. In 2008, Dr. Peter Hotez wrote an article entitled Neglected Infections of Poverty in the United States of America.

Dr. Hotez’s work highlighted the presence of “…largely hidden burden of diseases caused by a group of chronic and debilitating parasitic, bacterial, and congenital infections debilitating infectious diseases… disproportionately affect impoverished and under-represented minority populations…” throughout the United States. These diseases are not only found in poor communities, but also they perpetuate the cycle of poverty in these communities by causing long-term neurological dysfunction including cognitive impairments, intellectual retardation, and hearing and vision loss. These outcomes have devastating effects on child educational outcomes, the long-term productivity and employability of children that grow up in affected communities, and their ability to escape poverty.

Dr. Hotez came to the Adler School in March 2009 to give a presentation on Neglected Infections of Poverty. As a direct result of that meeting, a Summit Planning Committee (SPC) was established to organize and convene a national summit the Neglected Infections of Poverty.

The ISE collaborated with the CDC, Sabin Vaccine Institute, Eisenhower Institute, and American Public Health Association on that program. The Summit took place on October 27, 2009, at the Rayburn Building on Capitol Hill. Among the highlights of the Summit were presentations by Congressman Gene Green (D-TX) and Congressman Henry Johnson, Jr. (D-GA) who co-sponsoring an amendment to the Health Care Bill (H.R. 3700) that would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to report to Congress on the epidemiology, impact of, and appropriate funding required to address the neglected diseases of poverty.

At the Summit, a series of Working Groups were established that will continue to push forward on this issue. The groups are made up of a national collaborative of public and global health officials, policy makers, direct service providers, clinicians, economists, and other social scientists. Over the next few months, the Working Groups will work on the following issues:

- Mobilizing Communities and Messaging around NIPs
- Assessing the Economic Burden of NIPs
- NIP Data Collection, Surveillance and Mapping
- Basic Research and Development

Lynn Todman, PhD, director of the Institute on Social Exclusion, will lead the national effort around Mobilizing Communities and Messaging. A summary of the Summit, co-authored by Peter Hotez, MD, PhD; Marian McDonald, DrPH; Eileen Stillwaggon, PhD; and Lynn Todman, PhD, has been accepted for publication in the online edition of Emerging Infectious Diseases published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you are interested in learning more or becoming involved in this work on NIPs, please contact Lynn at ltodman@adler.edu or (312) 201-5900.
Breaking the Silence: 
Torture Survivors Speak Out

On October 28, 2009, the Adler Institute on Social Exclusion (ISE) conducted a workshop entitled “Breaking the Silence: Torture Survivors Speak Out”. This meeting was hosted by Dr. Todman, the Director of the ISE, along with Dr. Mary Fabri, the Director of Torture Treatment Services and International Training at the Heartland Alliance. Consistent with the ISE’s mission, this meeting demystified the needs of marginalized torture survivors living in the United States. The presentation commenced with the screening of “Breaking the Silence: Torture Survivors Speak Out,” a documentary made by the Film and Human Rights Program at Florida State University. The 90-minute presentation consisted of interviews of Torture Survivors who are presently affiliated with the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC).

It was apparent from the response of individuals in attendance that there was a greater need to educate the public about this important topic. The film was very educational as it recounted the survivors’ experiences with torture, as well as the process survivors have engaged in to heal. Dr. Fabri explained that the movie was significant because many individuals felt uncomfortable discussing torture; therefore great effort must occur in order to break the silence.

After the movie concluded, an informal discussion was held. Some questions raised included: “what is preventing Americans from hearing about incidences of torture even today,” and “how can we raise the level of consciousness of people about this topic?” Although answers to these complex questions were not solidified, the opportunity to discuss in a safe space was reassuring to many members of the audience.

During the meeting, a torture survivor from Uganda spoke. She told how she became affiliated with TASSC. Her story of survival was remarkable. She spoke with conviction, and her passion for seizing each day, was apparent. Although she is a Registered Nurse and has a Masters Degree in Public Health, she openly shared that her “qualifications don’t fit in this country,” and then revealed how this has impacted her ability to live comfortably in the United States.

APA’s Stance on Torture

On January 20, 2010, students, faculty, and staff attended a presentation given by Dr. Frank Summers, an Associate Professor at Northwestern University Medical School, and Dr. Mary Fabri, Senior Director of Torture Treatment Services and International Training at the Heartland Alliance. The presentation focused on the controversial debate which encompasses the American Psychological Association’s (APA) stance on the involvment of Psychologists in torture. Within the context of this presentation, the speakers discussed their views on the way in which the APA has dealt with incidences of psychologists allegedly being involved in torture. Following the presentation, students participated in dialogue about the topic at hand. Evaluations collected following the event expressed an appreciation of the disseminated information and noted that further individual research was necessary in order to review alternate opinions on this rather delicate issue.
The Institute on Social Exclusion (ISE) at the Adler School of Professional Psychology will be hosting a two-day conference on June 3-4, 2010, at The Drake Hotel located in downtown Chicago. The title of the event is "The Social Determinants of Mental Health: From Awareness to Action.” The purpose of the conference is to:

- Increase awareness about how social conditions, such as housing quality, land use, food security, employment opportunity, working conditions, the environment, public safety and public service systems, impact mental health and well-being;
- Encourage the development of mental health prevention and intervention strategies that are informed by the social determinants framework;
- Facilitate and support the establishment of multidisciplinary collaboration that can identify and address the social conditions that impact mental health; and
- Disseminate new knowledge and practice innovations.

The ISE has secured two highly accomplished keynote speakers for the conference. The first keynote speaker is David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., who is currently, the Director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute, Director of the Center of Excellence on Health Disparities, and the Poussaint-Satcher-Cosby Chair in Mental Health at the Morehouse School of Medicine. Dr. Satcher was also the 16th Surgeon General of the United States, a former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a member of the World Health Organization’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. The second speaker is Sandro Galea, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., who is a Gelman Professor and Chair of Epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. Dr. Galea’s research program seeks to uncover how determinants at multiple levels of influence—including policies, features of the social environment, molecular and genetic factors—jointly produce the health of populations. His research areas include the social and economic determinants of population health, epidemiology of mental health and substance abuse, and the consequences of conflict and mass trauma.

The conference will provide an opportunity for the Adler community as well as the community at large to learn and engage in dialogue about current pertinent issues in mental health.

For more information, please contact the ISE at 312.201.5900 x311 or ISE@adler.edu. Visit the conference website at www.regonline.com/sdomh2010conference

Call for Posters & Artwork

The ISE has issued a call for students to submit professional posters and/or artwork related to the theme of the annual conference.

For more information, go to: www.regonline.com/sdomh2010conference
On the evening of February 4th, 2010, over 170 attendants from the Adler community and the Chicago Police community, and the general public came together to view the “Faces of Poverty Photography Exhibit” at the Black Walnut Gallery. Sponsored by the Adler Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice which partnered with Volunteers of America, this exhibit is a collection of photographs taken by Chicago Police officers who are also students in Adler’s M.A. in Police Psychology program. The photographs depict the rarely captured lives of Chicago’s homeless population and represent a journey of deeper understanding about the problems faced by those in poverty on our city streets – a journey taken by officers who work in impoverished neighborhoods every day. By looking through the eyes of these caring police officers, attendants partook in the continuity rather than difference – the humanness that is shared by all of us. Observers were struck by the haunting images of familiar and unfamiliar places. Walking through the exhibit and reading the captions attached to the photographs, attendants could not help being moved to acknowledge the notion that an image of a familiar place to one person may represent comfort, normalcy, and abundance but to another, that same place, may represent a structural barrier to surpassing poverty.

The exhibit brought forth questions like what does poverty look like, and do we as a society recognize it when we see it, or do we simply turn a blind eye? Dr. Ray Crossman, Dr. Frank Gruba-McCallister, Dr. Laura Kunard, and Lieutenant Patricia Casey spoke to the gathering. In participating in this assignment, some of the police officers courageously shared their pre-existing ideas concerning poverty. The most common idea was that individuals who are on the streets simply need to pull up their boot straps in order to lift themselves out of poverty. By sharing their experiences with the community, the police officer-photographers undoubtedly aided the community in developing new views of poverty.

Pre-Conference Event “The Social Determinants of Mental Health: From Awareness to Action”

The exhibit will, once again, be on display at the conference entitled, “The Social Determinants of Mental Health: From Awareness to Action” scheduled for June 3-4, 2010 at the Drake Hotel. Sponsored, in part, by the Adler Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice, a pre-conference event will take place at the hotel on June 2nd at 3:00 pm. The theme of the pre-conference is the impact of violence on mental health. At this event, presentations will be made by Anne Parry from the Chicago Department of Public Health, who will be joined by Marlita White, LCSW and Erica B. Davis, MA, MS. The second presentation will be made by Dr. Carl Bell Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A reception will follow this presentation.

For more information about the conference, please visit: www.regonline.com/sdomy2010conference
About the Institute on Social Exclusion at The Adler School

The mission of the Adler Institute on Social Exclusion (ISE) is to advance social justice. We do this by working to integrate the concept of “social exclusion” into U.S. popular and public policy discourse; by helping to contextualize social disadvantage; and by advancing the idea that the point of intervention for addressing social disadvantage is its social, political, and economic context.

Social exclusion refers to the ways individuals and groups are denied access to rights, opportunities, and resources that are commonly available to most people. Adler School’s ISE is a catalyst for dialogue and action, helping to remove the often unseen barriers that undermine the ability of individuals to participate in mainstream American life.

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