

Creation of a Center for Stress, Resilience, and Personal Growth

April 30, 2020, Thursday

All of us at Mount Sinai have enormous pride in and gratitude for the remarkable, selfless care that Mount Sinai Health System clinicians have provided to COVID-19 patients. To recognize and support these very special workers, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is establishing a Center for Stress, Resilience, and Personal Growth. This new Center will address the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and lives of health care providers who have experienced grief about losing patients, anxiety about exposing colleagues and families to the virus, and fear of succumbing to the illness. I extend thanks to the Mount Sinai Boards of Trustees for their generous philanthropy which makes this new Center possible.

While the full impact of COVID-19 on front-line health care workers will become more fully known with time, previous studies of emergency and critical care physicians and nurses indicate a higher risk than their peers for developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and burnout from their exposure to suffering, death and dying, and cumulative stress. Caregivers with less experience and those with prior history of trauma are particularly vulnerable.

The motto we have adopted for the Center is “We Take Care of Our Own.” The Center will carry out its work through both clinical and research components. The multidisciplinary clinical arm will offer screening, psychoeducation, support groups, individual assessments, and resilience plans, and referrals for mental health care. The research branch will collect data, conduct longitudinal analyses, identify psychosocial and biological determinants of risk and resilience, and develop evidence-based interventions and novel treatments. All efforts will be led by experts within the School, which is already a world leader in PTSD research.



Deborah B. Marin, MD, the George and Marion Sokolik Blumenthal Professor of Psychiatry at the Icahn School of Medicine, will serve as Director of the new Center. Dr. Marin specializes in geriatric psychiatry and Alzheimer’s disease. In taking on this Directorship, she will retain her roles as Director of the Center for Spirituality and Health and Director of the Ombuds Office within the School. A member of the Mount Sinai faculty since 1992, Dr. Marin has held many important executive positions in the Department of Psychiatry, including Chief, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry; Director, Geriatric Psychiatry

Fellowship Program; Medical Director; and Vice Chair for Education. During her career,

she also served as Executive Vice President for Strategic Development and Chief Medical Officer for The Mount Sinai Hospital.



Dr. Marin will share leadership of the Center with a highly qualified team that will include Jonathan DePierro, PhD, Clinical Director of the Center; Adriana Feder, MD, Director for Research of the Center; and Craig L. Katz, MD, who will be an advisor to the Center.

Dr. DePierro, an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, is a clinical psychologist in the Mount Sinai World Trade Center (WTC) Mental Health Program, where he provides direct clinical care, supervises trainees, and conducts research. Based on his experience in assessing and treating trauma-related disorders, he has published on novel treatment approaches for PTSD, mental health service needs in WTC responders, and cognition-emotion interactions in individuals with chronic trauma exposure.

Dr. Feder is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Director of the Trauma and Resilience Program, Associate Director for Research at the WTC Mental Health Program, and an investigator in the Depression and Anxiety Center for Discovery and Treatment at the Icahn School of Medicine. Dr. Feder's clinical, epidemiological, and translational research has focused on resilience and stress-related disorders such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety disorders in trauma-exposed populations.

A Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Dr. Katz founded and directs Mount Sinai's Program in Global Mental Health, and was co-founder of the Disaster Psychiatry Outreach Program. Dr. Katz has written and co-edited books and papers in the fields of disaster psychiatry and global psychiatry.

The new Center will collaborate with and complement other Mount Sinai programs, such as those organized by the Office of Well-Being and Resilience and the mental health services offered through the Department of Psychiatry.

We have witnessed the courage of our health care workers in facing the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19. Through the Center, our workers will receive the appropriate mental health and resilience-building interventions needed to get through these experiences, and possibly even grow from them.

Dennis S. Charney, MD

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