Welcome from the AYA SIG Chair

Greetings AYA SIG Members!

We are excited to present our Fall SIG Newsletter introducing the new Leadership Board and providing updates on activities of the AYA SIG. Our SIG aims to promote awareness of AYA clinical and research needs, networking and collaboration, and best practices for incorporating psychological care into transition services for AYAs.

Based on feedback we received from SIG Members, we have decided to structure our newsletters differently this year. Newsletters will be disseminated quarterly with a specific focus for each season (e.g., new board members, student/program spotlight, AYA programming at the Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference [SPPAC]). Please feel free to contact us with any ideas about future newsletter items or if you are interested in having a student or AYA clinical program considered for our newsletter spotlight. We look forward to your ongoing interest and support!

Siddika Mulchan, PsyD
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Introducing our New Leadership Board

Chair: Siddika Mulchan, PsyD
Dr. Siddika Mulchan is a Pediatric Psychologist at Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida where she has helped to build the newly-developed Pediatric Behavioral Health program by providing inpatient consultation/liaison services and outpatient psychological intervention to youth with various medical and neurodevelopmental comorbidities. She is passionate about conducting research and providing clinical services to improve transition readiness among AYA with sickle cell disease. She will be transitioning to a hematology/oncology psychologist position at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center in December 2018. In her free time, she enjoys practicing yoga and spending time with her three cats.

Past Chair: Christine Sieberg, PhD
Dr. Christine Sieberg is an Attending Psychologist at Boston Children’s Hospital, an Assistant Professor in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and Director of the Biobehavioral Pediatric Pain Lab at Boston Children’s Hospital. She has a strong clinical and research interest in AYA health particularly as it relates to chronic pain. Her grant-funded research explores the biopsychosocial mechanisms contributing to chronic pain with a focus on identifying young people who demonstrate amplified Central Nervous System processing of pain information and who are at elevated risk for adverse pain-related outcomes and reduced benefit of pain treatment. She is the past chair of the AYA SIG.

Chair Elect: Lila Pereira, PhD
Dr. Lila Pereira is a postdoctoral fellow at New York Medical College and Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital. She received her PhD from Palo Alto University and completed her pre-doctoral internship in Child Clinical/Pediatric Psychology at MetroHealth Medical Center. Currently, Dr. Pereira works with Pediatric Hematology and Oncology patients. Her work has been a driving force in developing the AYA Oncology program. Her research utilizes video narratives of patient experiences with illness to improve patient quality of life. She is also the Research Director of Families in Psychology Project. When she is not at work, she spends most of her time with playing soccer (usually with her family) and enjoying music.

Intervention Co-Chair: Amanda Feinstein, PhD
Dr. Amanda Feinstein is a licensed clinical psychologist and clinical instructor at Stanford University School of Medicine. She completed her PhD at Georgia State University, internship at UCLA Semel Institute, and postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford. She practices as a pediatric pain psychologist in the Pediatric Pain Management Clinic and Pediatric Rehabilitation Program at Stanford Children’s Health. Dr. Feinstein also runs a part-time private practice in the Bay Area. Her research interests include Adolescents and Young Adults with chronic pain, resilience factors in pediatric pain, as well as complementary and integrative approaches to pain management. In her free time, she walks her dog, Mighty, around the beautiful landscape of Northern California.

Intervention Co-Chair: Jennifer Allen, PhD
Dr. Jennifer Allen is a Clinical Psychologist at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital (SJCRH) in Memphis, Tennessee. She serves as the pain psychologist on the multidisciplinary Pain Management Service at SJCRH and also works in the Psychology Clinic at SJCRH where she provides inpatient and outpatient clinical services to a predominately adolescent and young adult (AYA) hematology/oncology patient population. Dr. Allen collaborates on research projects that focus on psychological and pharmacological interventions for pediatric pain amongst hematology/oncology patients and survivors of childhood cancer. Her clinical and research interests involve pediatric pain, opioid misuse and abuse, AYA with chronic medical illnesses, and promoting healthy behaviors.
Introducing our New Leadership Board (cont.)

Measurement Co-Chair: Jessica Pierce, PhD
Dr. Jessica Pierce is a Research Scientist and Pediatric Psychologist at Nemours Children’s Hospital (NCH) in Orlando, Florida. Her research interests are focused on transition from pediatric to adult healthcare outcomes in young adults with type 1 diabetes. Clinically, she functions as the psychologist for the diabetes team at NCH and enjoys working with children, teens, young adults, and families. She earned her BS in Psychology from the University of Florida and her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Southern Mississippi. She completed her internship and postdoc in pediatric psychology at Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children.

Measurement Co-Chair: Lauren Quast
Lauren Quast is a third year graduate student in Dr. Ronald Blount’s Pediatric Psychology Lab at the University of Georgia. She is currently studying patient, parent, and family factors related to medical adherence, healthcare responsibility, readiness to transition from pediatric to adult-based care, and medical outcomes in adolescent and young adult (AYA) solid organ transplant recipients. In addition to her research with AYA transplant recipients, Lauren is also passionate about her volunteer work in a variety of camp settings for adolescents impacted by cancer and Tourette Syndrome.

Policy Co-Chair: Beth Garland, PhD
Beth H. Garland, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at Baylor College of Medicine and Licensed Psychologist at Texas Children's Hospital. Her clinical focus is with adolescent and young adult eating disorders as well as weight management and works on an interprofessional team in the section of Adolescent Medicine. Her research and teaching focus has centered on family participation and motivation in weight management, transition to adult based mental health services for adolescents and young adults, and the use of Motivational Interviewing in healthcare settings.

Policy Co-Chair: Amy Lang, MS
Amy Lang is a third year doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her research experiences during graduate school have broadly focused on the psychological impact of pediatric chronic health conditions. In particular, Amy is interested in the unique challenges that adolescents and emerging adults with chronic health conditions face as they transition to adulthood. She is excited for the opportunity to serve on the Policy Committee of the AYA SIG Leadership Board this year!

Communications Chair: Jill Plevinsky, PhD
Dr. Jill Plevinsky is our new Communications Chair! She recently earned her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science after completing her residency in pediatric psychology through the Brown Clinical Psychology Training Consortium. Jill is currently a T32 post-doctoral fellow in the Center for Adherence and Self-Management at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital where she will be examining self-management in adolescents and young adults with chronic health conditions. Outside of work, you’ll most likely find her browsing a flea market, trying a new restaurant, or at a concert.

Student/Trainee Representative: Jeanette Iskander, MA
Jeannette Iskander is a 4th year doctoral student at Kent State University currently applying for internship. Her research focuses on the transition of responsibility from parent to AYA in youth with type 1 diabetes. She loves being actively involved in SPP as she is completing her time as the Student Representative for SPP and transitioning to her new role as part of the AYA leadership team!
Gabrielle Piela, Fordham University
Gabrielle Piela is a 4th year undergraduate student at Fordham University, studying psychology. She is currently collecting data for her senior thesis, studying if a relationship exists between social media usage and changing attitudes toward LGBT identities, particularly between high school and college aged students. When she is not leading her acapella group to greatness, Gabrielle is also a research assistant in the Pediatric Psycho-oncology lab at New York Medical College under the direction of Lila Pereira, PhD and Suzanne Braniecki, PhD. She works on studies that examine the usage of video testimonials in AYA cancer patients and survivors. Gabrielle plans to apply to Clinical Psychology PhD programs this year and would like to conduct her graduate research on sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity, particularly in adolescents and young adults.
The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, and American College of Physicians recently collaborated on a clinical report titled “Supporting the Health Care Transition From Adolescence to Adulthood in the Medical Home”. The report provides practice-based quality improvement guidance on key elements of transition: planning, transfer, and integration into adult care. The report also describes an evidence-informed, structured health care transition process called the Six Core Elements of Health Care Transition developed by GotTransition.

Winter Webinar
Thursday, December 6, 2018
11AM to 12PM EST:

This webinar will feature presentations from our SPPAC 2018 Student Poster Award Winners Jill Plevinsky and Alix McLaughlin.

Our Policy Co-Chair Amy Lang will also present on perceived health competence and quality of life of AYA with chronic health conditions.


Gutierrez-Colina et al. examined adherence barriers across stages of development in pediatric epilepsy. Prevalence of barriers as well as the degree of influence on health outcomes varied by developmental stage, thus providing support for developmentally-tailored adherence interventions be used in youth with epilepsy.


Kullgren et al. identified unique characteristics of AYA referred for psychology consults, including gender, length of hospital stay, and repeat consults as well as referral questions. They conclude with recommendations for the developmentally-appropriate care and treatment of AYA while medically hospitalized.


Plevinsky et al. developed and provided preliminary validation of the CAMP-AYA (Communication About Medication Prescriptions-AYA). Preliminary evidence supported the measure as useful for assessing patient-provider communication based on measure of convergent and divergent validity.

For more information about the SPP AYA SIG, please visit: http://www.societyofpediatricpsychology.org/adolescent

To receive information about joining the AYA SIG or contributing to SIG activities, please contact the current SIG Chair:
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