

1-2021

NYMC Synapse Issue 28

School of Medicine Student Senate, New York Medical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://touro scholar.touro.edu/nymc_synapse

Recommended Citation

School of Medicine Student Senate, New York Medical College. (2021). NYMC Synapse Issue 28. Retrieved from https://touro scholar.touro.edu/nymc_synapse/18

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the NYMC Publications at Touro Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Synapse by an authorized administrator of Touro Scholar. For more information, please contact Timothy J Valente touro.scholar@touro.edu.



NYMC Synapse

Transmitting news to the students of New York Medical College

January 2021 Issue 28

2020 Recap and So Much to Look Forward to in 2021!

By Scarlett Tohme, MS4

2020 is now in our past, and I don't need to emphasize the impact that the past year's global events have had on each of our lives. What I do want to showcase, however, is the incredible resiliency and adaptability that we have maintained to get through and rise above the challenges. We have welcomed the Class of 2024 to the NYMC family, and time and time again we have seen how creative the class has been to build a strong community despite the physical barriers that the pandemic has presented with especially with the first ever virtual Friendsgiving and virtual White Coat Ceremony. The Class of 2023 took initiatives to fit anti-racism and be the leaders on campus to improve comradery and diversity and inclusion. The Class of 2022 began the journey of clinical medicine, not letting the pandemic deter them from exploring the beauty of the art of medicine. The Class of 2021 has applied for residency, interviewed, and now they are less than two months from matching into their dream specialties. We have all learned the importance of self-care, acceptance of human emotions, relationship with loved ones, and the meaning of hope. Hope has kept us looking forward to a brighter future.

As we have entered 2021, let's continue to hold onto this hope. Let's look forward to the incredible things that our classmates at NYMC will be doing, from the Medical Student Research Forum, NYMedTalks, Match Day, Student Celebration Day, and Graduation. Here's to 2021 and our future.

What is Synapse?

The *NYMC Synapse* is a newsletter published by the NYMC Student Senate for our classmates, faculty, administration and other students at NYMC. We highlight news from student senate, medical education, student affairs, and financial planning, give important updates for each class and highlight big events, outstanding students, and extraordinary professors.

Keep an eye out for these newsletters about once a month and don't miss out on the amazing things that are happening at NYMC!

In This Issue:

2020 Recap and So Much to Look Forward to in 2021.....	Page 1
Highlights from the AAMC Annual Meeting.....	Page 2-3
CBT – the inside scoop from Zanki Psych's MVP	Page 4-5
Student Club Spotlight: A Talk with NYMC Wine Club.....	Page 5

Highlights from the AAMC Annual Meeting

By Rajkumar S. Pammal, MS2

This past November, the AAMC Annual Meeting was transformed into a virtual format given the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with nearly 5,000 other medical students, educators and administrators, I was fortunate to attend this “Learn Serve Lead: The Virtual Experience” three-day virtual event, which centered on not only the COVID-19 pandemic but also many of the pressing topics facing medical schools and teaching hospitals nationwide, such as conscious and unconscious racial bias, and inequities in academic medicine in general. Here are some highlights from key conference sessions:

Is There a Cure for Racism? (Ibram X. Kendi, PhD)

This session with Ibram X. Kendi, PhD, best-selling author of *How to Be an Antiracist* and Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, tackled difficult questions pertaining to how we make progress in eliminating racial injustice and inequality. As a survivor of stage 4 colon cancer himself, Dr. Kendi drew a powerful metaphor about diagnosing cancer and diagnosing racism. He describes how when physicians diagnose a patient with cancer it is generally accepted that this is done in an effort to help the patient and chart a treatment path forward, but when an individual or the nation is “diagnosed” as suffering from racism, this is viewed as divisive and inflammatory. Dr. Kendi encouraged changing these existing narratives about discussions on racism and diversity training as divisive, opting rather to portray them as necessary steps in the self-education and healing of our nation that have the capacity to bring people together under a shared sense of equality. He further likened a cure for racism as being both a local and systemic treatment, by not only surgically removing racist policies that perpetuate racial inequity, but also systemically flooding our nation with anti-racist policies. As



it pertains to eliminating racism and promoting racial equality in medical schools and medicine, Dr. Kendi recommended gathering an empirical sense of the disparities to inform future policy. For example, medical schools should document the demographics of the students applying, being accepted, matriculating, and graduating from their institution so they can understand in which areas representation and diversity are lacking. Along these lines of empirical evidence informing policy, the COVID Racial Data Tracker (<https://covidtracking.com/race>) has demonstrated that since April, Black, Latinx, and native people have been consistently dying at higher rates from COVID-19 (near 2X) than white people. On a more individual level, Dr. Kendi emphasized the importance of medical providers treating patients as individuals, defining and uprooting racism in their clinical practices, and working through mistrust with patients by active conversations that nurture relationships

Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection (Vivek Murthy, MD)

Dr. Vivek Murthy was the 19th Surgeon-General of the United States and is a national leader on promoting humanism at the core of medicine and combatting the loneliness epidemic. In this session, he reflected on his extensive research and own personal experiences on humanism, building connections, and preventing burnout. Dr. Murthy provided an eloquent idea of remembering what unites us as human beings and what humanity is, such as wanting the best for our families and children, and feeling better when giving and receiving love. Along these lines, Dr. Murthy stated that relationship is the foundation in which we build upon more productive dialogue. Dr. Murthy encouraged staying connected to family, friends, patients, and finding a daily ritual in life that enables reflection, emphasizing quality over quantity. These powerful moments make us centered and grounded for subsequent valuable interactions. Finally, Dr. Murthy commented on how a contributor to physician burnout is the sense that sometimes doctors do not have self-efficacy, or the idea that a patient's health problems are out of their control. For example, tinkering with medications and encouraging lifestyle modifications in the clinic can only go so far if a patient's true ailments stem from an insecure housing situation or lack of access to quality food. Overall, we need to recognize these broader factors that contribute to our patients' health and how we can enable doctors to be partners in processes that influence determinants of health (i.e., advocacy and policy), which in turn will further sustain our profession.

COVID-19: Progress to Date and Preparing for Future Pandemics (Anthony Fauci, MD and Ross McKinney, MD)

Of note, at the time of this presentation, the U.S. death toll was approximately 250,000, and no COVID-19 vaccines had been approved for use. However, much of the commentary remains applicable to our current situation. Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, gave a scientifically-driven presentation on the global pandemic and our path forward. He envisioned a gradual process of vaccination beginning with essential workers and the most vulnerable populations, followed by the general population. As we approach Q3 and Q4 of 2021, we can expect a high degree of return to normality, but this is indeed dependent on adequate vaccination uptake and public health measures. Dr. Ross McKinney, Chief Scientific Officer of the AAMC, further commented on the importance of maintaining consistent public health messaging backed by science, and continuing to alleviate any public concern about vaccines.

CBT – the Inside Scoop to Zanki Psych’s MVP

By Camille Briskin, MS2

I am unbelievably grateful and privileged to have had access to great therapy for the last few years. I came into medical school with an amazing mental health squad, but it took years to find professionals who were a good fit for me. I wanted to share some of the tools I’ve learned over the past year in hopes that they’ll help others as well. More specifically, I’m going to outline a couple of methods I’ve learned through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Unlike traditional psychotherapy, CBT is more skills-based and can be put to use right away - no need to unpack every aspect of your childhood. It takes practice at the beginning, as does learning any new skill, but I can honestly say that practicing CBT has rewired my brain in some really amazing ways.

It’s effective to start practicing these skills on “baseline” days when you’re in a more neutral emotional state. When I first started, my therapy homework was to try these once daily for a week so that it became more habitual. This helps wire the skill in your brain so that it’s more easily accessible when your mood is not at baseline. I think about it as if I’m hiking somewhere new, somewhere without any trails mapped out. I lay down a path to the top when my backpack is only carrying a few pebbles so that I can more easily find my way up on the days when my backpack is filled with bricks and stones.

One of the first techniques I learned is called Looking For Color, and it’s pretty much exactly what it sounds like. Let’s say you’re trying to study but can’t stop thinking about how behind you feel, and anxiety becomes all-consuming. First take notice and pause, close your eyes, take a deep breath, and have some water. Visuals provide a lot of stimuli, and emotional distress exhausts the brain, so it’s good to start with resupplying the basics - oxygen and water. Then tell yourself something positive, such as, “I’m

proud of myself for exercising yesterday”, or “I shared some notes with friends to help them out”...anything that comes to mind. Now it’s time to look for colors. If you can, go outside, or merely change the scenery. Going through each color of the rainbow, look for each color in your surroundings while taking deep breaths, and do this for about 5 minutes. Going through this process gives your parasympathetic nervous system a chance to kick in, and your prefrontal cortex can incorporate logic into how you’re feeling. To continue with the same example, this might look something like, “I’m stressed because I feel behind in class, but I won’t be able to catch up if I feel too anxious. I’ll take a break to reset and then get back to work”.

Another useful technique is called ‘Catch It Check It Change It’. This is great for noticing harmful thought patterns that are hardwired in your brain, the ones that happen automatically. This is also a skill pertaining to mindfulness and awareness of our thoughts. It took me longer to start utilizing this effectively, but it’s extremely powerful if you get the hang of it. The first step requires ‘catching’ the negative thought. For example, throughout first year, I was convinced I was going to fail every single exam. Every one. In my mind, even though I had been passing previous exams and doing just fine, I was convinced that the next one would be different. The next step is to check it - put the thought in check by challenging it. Ask yourself, is this helpful or harmful and/or dysfunctional? If it’s the latter, you can apply cognitive redirection by challenging it and stating why it’s harmful. Spending time thinking about failing an upcoming exam was harming me because it lowered my mood, self-esteem, and confidence, and it also impaired my focus. Step three involves a conscious diversion of thought, a recognition that you want to invest this energy elsewhere. To finish my example, this could look something like, “I’m smart and capable as evidenced by my passing all of my exams prior to this one. I work hard and my hard work pays off”.

I'll reiterate that while these techniques may sound simple in theory, they can be truly difficult to implement - rewiring our brains is hard work! But practicing on your baseline days will hopefully help you on more difficult days, as has been my experience. I also want to mention that if you're going through a difficult time, it may be hard to learn these skills right now. When I first started practicing, I often struggled to find the motivation to reach for the tools, even though I knew they existed. If this resonates with you, please try not to judge yourself. Doing our best looks different every day, and the input is far more important than the output. We all deserve to hear kind words from ourselves, and we all deserve to feel proud for simply trying.

Student Club Spotlight: A Conversation with the NYMC Wine Club

Medha Reddy, MS1, talks to Megan Cavanaugh, MS2, from Wine Club

Q: What exactly is Wine Club?

Wine Club is a place for all NYMC students to gather, enjoy trying different wines, and learn about wine and food pairings in a fun, friendly environment. We hope to foster relationships between students from different classes over our shared love of wine and cheese!

Q: How has COVID-19 and the switch to remote activities changed Wine Club's programming? What can we expect to see in the coming months?

While last year we were able to host wine tasting events in person, we have unfortunately not been able to do so this year. Instead, we have switched to remote Wine Club events! In November 2020, we hosted a virtual Bachelorette viewing party

as part of Wellness Week, and distributed snacks and wine for students to enjoy while watching the show. We are currently organizing a Valentine's Day wine and cheese tasting, where we will offer wine and cheese pairings to students shortly before the holiday! Student will have the opportunity to sign up via a Google Form to be sent out by email.

Q: When you step into a wine shop, what's your selection process like?

I usually think about what I'll be eating with the wine to decide what general category to buy from, and then I pick a price point. Since we're students, my go-to price is anything under \$15. Westchester Wine Warehouse (right in White Plains, not spon con) has a great selection of wine and they give wines a rating, which helps me narrow down what to pick!

Q: Last but not least, what are your wine recommendations?

Oyster Bay Sauvignon Blanc for white, Jeanne Marie Cabernet Sauvignon for red

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / CREATIVE DESIGN

Jood Ani – Class of 2022

CONTRIBUTORS

Student Senate

Scarlett Tohme – M4

Rajkumar S. Pammal – M2

Camille Briskin – M2

Medha Reddy – M1

FOUNDER

Seung (Paul) Jeong - Class of 2018
