

# THE GOOD NEWSLETTER

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University of Colorado - Anschutz Medical Campus  
Department of Psychiatry Monthly Newsletter

Summer  
Issue

Pages 2-4

## 2021 **PURPLE** Program

Pages 5-6

## Team Spotlight

Page 7

## Shout Outs & In the News

Pages 8-9

## Fun & Games

## *A Message from the Good News team*

Please remember to inform us anytime you engage in scholarly or media activities by responding to the survey link below. We have launched social media channels and would love to feature your work!

**[Click on this link to be directed to our submission page!](#)**

Members of the Good News Team include Chair: Claudia Iannelli; Designers: Aki Suzuki and Emily McIntyre; Editors: Kristen Raymond and Aileen Norton; Contributors: Shannon McWilliams, Kimberly Slavsky, Shaleeta Flagg, Melissa Sinclair, Brittany Pittman and Merlin Ariefdjohan.



Department of Psychiatry  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS



**BRAIN HEALTH** for all, for life.

# PSYCHIATRY RESEARCH INNOVATIONS

**ADVANCING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE**

Content: Merlin Ariefdjohan, Emmaly Perks, Lily Luo | Design: Claudia Iannelli



## The PURPLE Program

This summer hosted the sixth cycle of the Psychiatry Undergraduate Research Program and Learning Experience (PURPLE). This 12-week, summer pipeline program was started in 2016 by Merlin Ariefdjohan, PhD, MPH. Throughout the program, applicants learn about the Department of Psychiatry's (DOPsych) research mission to promote "brain health for all, for life." PURPLE provides mentorship to undergraduate students through supervised research activities, clinical shadowing, and didactic sessions covering topics from basic research skills and scientific communication to professional branding. PURPLE remains the only student mentorship program at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus that provides clinical research mentorship to undergraduate students, with a focus on mental health.

PURPLE intentionally seeks to attract diverse, accomplished students from a wide variety of cultural, geographic, and ethnic backgrounds, and aims to help students become scientists and clinicians. Each year, approximately 60 applicants go through a rigorous selection process before 10-15% are invited to join the cohort. Cohorts are intentionally kept small, as each student intern is paired with a faculty mentor to work on an original clinical research project during the program. Besides building a pipeline of future mental health professionals, the program also allows faculty mentors to further develop their mentoring skills by sharing expertise and knowledge.

Under the current direction of Emmaly Perks, MA, CCRP and with the assistance of PURPLE Program Coordinator Lily Luo, BS, the 2021 cycle hosted the largest cohort ever with nine bright and talented students hailing from across the nation to work with respective faculty mentors in the DOPsych. Universities represented included all CU campuses, Regis University, Metropolitan State University, Union College, and Stanford University. Although the program was held virtually this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, student-mentor dyads remained enthusiastic in completing their respective projects. These works were subsequently presented as oral and poster presentations at the PURPLE Symposium on August 13th. Turn to page four to meet our 2021 cohort and learn about their mentors.

**Building a Pipeline of Future Healthcare Professionals**

In just six years, PURPLE has already increased the diversity of research and healthcare professionals in Colorado. Interns have come from rural and urban communities, are often first in their families to attend college, and have included DACA recipients, international students, refugees, multi-lingual students, and academic scholars (from other foundation programs such as Puksta, Boettcher, and Gates). In a recent survey sent to 27 PURPLE alumni (18 respondents; 67% response rate), more than half indicated that participation in the program had improved their research skills including data analysis, literature review, scientific thinking and communication (including creating academic posters and public presentations). Additional benefits included improving a sense of teamwork, networking and professionalism, which alumni noted to be highly applicable in their current career/academic pursuits.

Alumni also reported that PURPLE influenced their decision to pursue additional education and careers in healthcare; the majority of PURPLE alumni are now employed in various roles in healthcare settings, have matriculated to medical schools, or returned to CU Anschutz as research professionals. By supporting learners from all walks of life, PURPLE aligns closely with the department's DEI mission and in just 12 weeks, has a clear and lasting impact on the lives of students.

Truly, in DOPsych, it is well-known that “purple” is much more than just a color!

## Quotes from Alumni

“PURPLE was an amazing experience that combined elements of education with the empowering opportunity to plan and execute research which culminated in a project that I and other interns will always be proud of. I learned so much about what it means to work as a team, seek out answers to improve the lives of others, problem solve, and to make connections in a professional environment— skills that will last me far into my professional career.”

“I enjoyed my experience with PURPLE being exposed to the academic/clinical side that I never thought I would be interested in. I think programs like this are the best part of being an undergraduate because it helps you to understand if a certain career field is for you or not.”

[Click here to learn more about PURPLE](#)



## The 2021 PURPLE Cohort



### From top-left:

- Alazar Gebremichael (Mentor: Sarah Kennedy, PhD)
- Madison Harris (Mentor: Monique Germone, PhD, MA)
- Evamaria Kent (Mentor: Allison Dempsey, PhD)
- Adriana Lopez (Mentor: Amber McDonald, PhD)
- Luis Alan Martinez (Mentor: Christine Garver-Apgar, PhD)
- Eddy Panklang (Mentor: Patrick Romani, PhD)
- Aneri Patel (Mentors: Jarrod Ellingson, PhD, and Joe Schacht, PhD)
- Shanna Trott (Mentor: Michelle West, PhD)
- Naomi Tubbs (Mentor: Jacob Holzman, PhD)
- Lily Luo (Program Administrator)
- Emmaly Perks (Program Director)

Thank you to sponsors, mentors, instructors, and everyone else that made this program possible!



# Team Spotlight:

## Aviva Olsavsky

Content: Aviva Olsavsky | Design: Claudia Iannelli

### When did you start working for the DOPsych?

My husband and I moved to Colorado in 2015 after I completed Adult Psychiatry Residency at UCLA for me to pursue Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship training at CU SOM.

### What is your role here?

I'm an Assistant Professor who wears a few different hats--clinician, researcher, and educator. My research focuses on perinatal substance use and early adverse experiences and their impact on maternal brain and mother-infant relationships. Clinically, I work with women from adolescence through adulthood and their young children, helping mothers who struggle with mental health issues during pregnancy and postpartum. I also design curricula for residents and fellows, including one recent individualized course for residents who are new parents and returning to clinical duties following parental leave.

### What do you like best about working here?

I really enjoy my work with multidisciplinary teams, both in research and in clinical settings. The enthusiasm, drive, motivation, and collegiality of my co-workers truly "makes my day."

### If you could have an alternate job (something totally different from what you do now), what would it be?

That's an easy one. I'd probably be a shark biologist. From my early years, I've always loved the marine environment and considered the idea of becoming a marine biologist. Now, I enjoy this interest through scuba, underwater photography, and learning about the amazing creatures I meet when I jump into the "deep blue" with my favorite scuba partner (my hubs, Bjoern).

Aviva's nominator said, "Aviva is always so enthusiastic, positive and collaborative. She's also doing such great work and I thought it would be great for more people in the DOPsych to learn about her!"



# Team Spotlight:

Continued

## Aviva Olsarsky

### What's your favorite book or movie and why?

Two of my favorite movies are "Django Unchained" and "Jurassic Park." Favorite books include Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Gogol's short story, "Diary of a Madman," which portrays the thought processes of a man who is suffering from the onset of psychosis.

### Morning bird or night owl?

I titrate my schedule to my deadlines and job responsibilities but would prefer to be awake early and asleep early, though it doesn't always work out that way!

### Do you have a favorite quote?

"You are so young, so much before all beginning, and I would like to beg you . . . as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer." Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, Letter #4, 1903

## Five Fun Facts About Aviva:

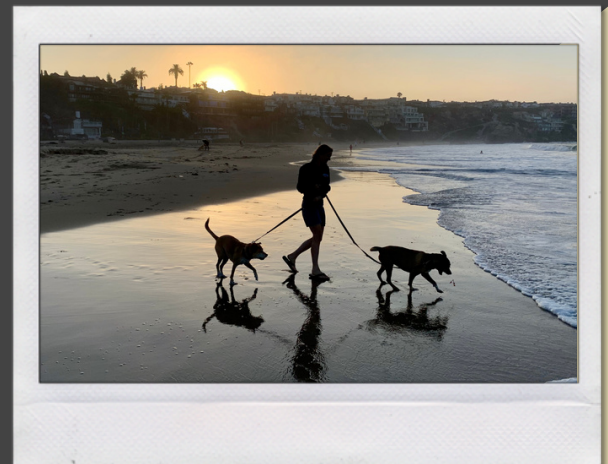
Her favorite food is Eggplant Parmigiana.

Aviva's first international travel adventure was to Moscow, Russia!

Aviva loves opera! Her Favorite opera character/singer is Queen of the Night/Diana Damrau.

Her favorite soccer player is Megan Rapinoe.

She believes there is ONLY ONE baseball team worth following - the New York Yankees!



Aviva pictured with her dogs on a recent beach trip!

# Shout Outs & News!

Design: Claudia Iannelli



Dr. Allison Dempsey, in collaboration with Dr. Cristina Wood (Anesthesiology) was awarded Colorado Fetal Care Center via CHCO Seed Grant funding in the amount of \$16,500 for her proposal, "A Pilot Multi-Center Randomized Control Trial of Feasibility and Efficacy of a Cognitive Behavioral Intervention to Reduce Anxiety Among Woman with High-Risk Pregnancies with Scheduled Cesarean Deliveries in Fetal Care Settings." The CUSOM Department of Anesthesiology has also approved an additional award of \$5,000 to support this project.

With support from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute, and input from parents, teachers, clinicians and an autistic self-advocate, Dr. Laura Anthony and her team created twelve 3 to 5 minute videos for parents about how to support elementary school age children with executive function problems, including managing disappointment and unexpected changes, staying on track with learning, or staying calm when faced with a challenge. Built on evidence-based techniques from the *Unstuck and on Target!* curriculum, the videos can be used to support not only parents, but also paraprofessionals, new professionals, or any staff who will benefit from a basic introduction to executive functioning. They can be used on their own or to support generalization of *Unstuck* principles that students will learn in *Unstuck* groups. Five of the videos are also available in Spanish.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS VIA ONE DRIVE](#)



Dr. Jason Williams was featured in ABC news story, "The boarding crisis: Why some kids are waiting days in the ER for psychiatric ward beds."

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



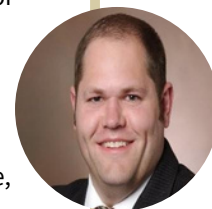
Dr. Evan Plys was named as a Silver Award recipient of the 2021 Innovative Research on Aging Awards by the Mather Institute. The award came with a \$1000 prize which he donated to Senior Housing Options.



Dr. Michael Allen was invited to serve as a Scientific Advisor to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.



Dr. Jesse Hinckley was selected for the 2021 Legislation Implementation Work Group - Regulating Marijuana Concentrates (HB21-1317), Colorado Department of Revenue, Marijuana Enforcement Division.





Design: Aki Suzuki

# FUN & GAMES

## Where's Waldo?

#DYK that "before we begin scanning the page for Waldo, we engage the neurons that are most adept at recognizing the distinct image of Waldo? For example, because Waldo has red on his clothes, we call upon the red neurons. This way, we create an image of Waldo in our "mind's eye;" we have our "neuron detective" ready to intercept Waldo." Thank you to [exploringyourmind.com](http://exploringyourmind.com) for teaching us something new!

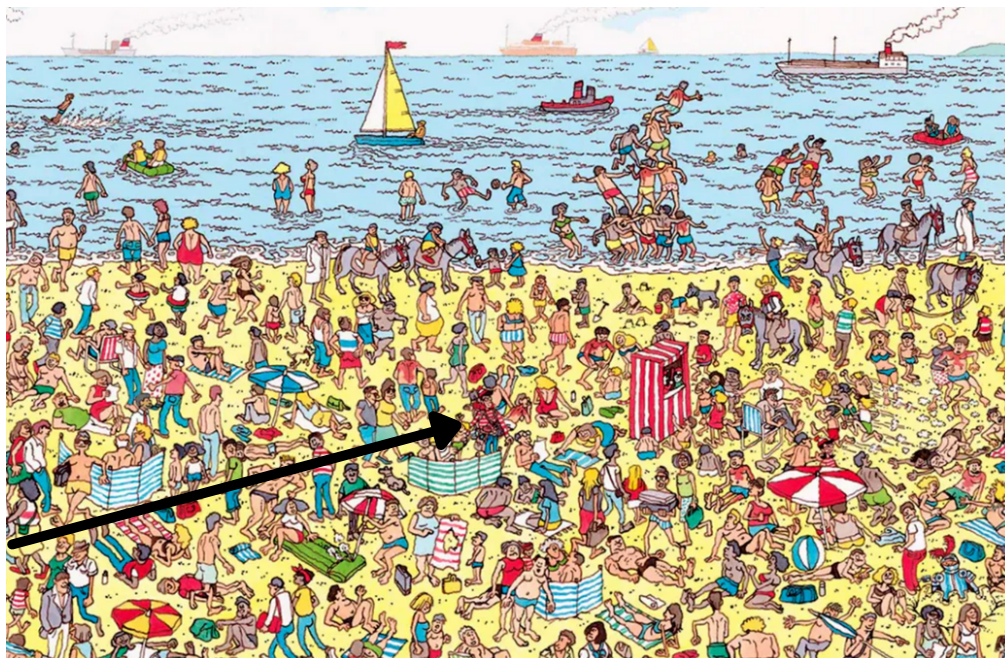




# FUN & GAMES



*Where's Waldo...here's Waldo!*



WE CAN'T WAIT TO CONNECT WITH YOU!



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On Monday, 3/15/21 the Department of Psychiatry launched accounts on both Twitter and Instagram.

We will be sharing helpful and insightful facts about mental health, links to media and news articles featuring our faculty, and other important departmental information. You can follow, retweet, and engage with our content at [cu\\_psychiatry](#) on both platforms.