

Video: 5 Flash Talks on Mental Health

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High among the concerns of psychological scientists is support for mental health and well-being. As part of the [2021 APS Virtual Convention](#), researchers shared 15-minute flash talks, available for viewing below, on the work they are doing to improve understanding of the factors that contribute to mental illnesses and disorders and to develop new treatments for these conditions.

Are We All Mad Here? Anger as an Important Symptom of Maternal Depression

Brittany R. Pope (OhioGuidestone's Institute of Family and Community Impact)

Limited research has connected anger to postpartum depression and anxiety. Pope and colleagues found that anger symptoms improved significantly more than depression and anxiety symptoms in mothers receiving psychotherapy for maternal depression. This suggests that psychotherapy programs could more intentionally target anger in order to improve maternal health care and better support motherhood.

Genetic Invincibility Effects and Alcohol Use Disorder: When Negative DNA Test Results Lead to False Reassurance

Annalise Perricone (Yale University), Matthew S. Lebowitz (Columbia University), and Woo-kyoung Ahn (Yale University)

Detecting genetic health risks is clinically beneficial, but providing people with this information may carry risks of its own. In this study, Perricone and colleagues found that upon learning that they lacked a genetic predisposition for alcoholism, participants took the symptoms of alcoholism less seriously. Additionally, educational materials similar to those currently available from genetic-testing companies were found to counteract this false reassurance among non-problem-drinkers, but not problem-drinkers.

Changes in Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ilana Haliwa (West Virginia University), Jerin Lee (University of Connecticut), Jenna M. Wilson (West Virginia University), Natalie J. Shook (University of Connecticut)

Changes in mental health were assessed just before the COVID-19 pandemic, from September to December 2019, and during the pandemic, from April to June 2020, within three samples of U.S. adults. Haliwa and colleagues found significant increases in anxiety and stress but not depression. Financial concerns and the disruption of daily life were the most consistent predictors of psychological distress.

Quality of Life in a Severe OCD Sample: A Three-Way Interaction Between Experiential Avoidance, Depression, and OCD Symptoms

Morgan E. Browning (University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth; McLean Hospital), Samantha Malatesta (Boston University School of Public Health), Nathaniel P. Van Kirk (McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School)

Browning and colleagues found that OCD symptoms significantly reduced quality of life in patients with low to moderate levels of depression and low levels of experiential avoidance (an unwillingness to experience uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, and sensations). For patients with higher levels of depression and experiential avoidance, however, OCD symptoms had a more limited effect on quality of life, whereas depression was more significant. This research may help to inform future interventions intended to improve the quality of life for people with OCD by targeting depression in addition to symptom severity.

Brain Network Properties Differentiate Track Risk for Bipolar Disorder

Jeffrey M. Spielberg (University of Delaware), Harish Karne (Cleveland Clinic), Naomi Sadeh (University of Delaware), Melanie Matyi (University of Delaware), Amit Anand (Cleveland Clinic)

Individuals at risk for bipolar disorder (BD) often initially seek treatment for depression. Unfortunately, antidepressants can contribute to the high-energy mood swings, known as mania, associated with BD. Identifying biomarkers for BD risk could help to prevent this kind of misdiagnosis. Spielberg and colleagues identified brain-network properties related to emotion regulation that varied with BD risk levels in patients with major depressive disorder, which may improve diagnostic specificity.