

Psychotherapy E-Newsletter



Fall | 2021

Dear Colleagues,

We hope this Newsletter finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe in a year that has brought both challenges and light at the end of the tunnel. Despite it all, the need for personal and professional connection and support remains the anchor to weather the difficulties this year has brought. In this issue we have exciting articles in a variety of topics, please see below for a list.

We continue to provide you with informative and engaging information on our past and upcoming activities and programming. Please don't hesitate to contact us for contributions, reflections or comments, your feedback and participation is valuable!

Best wishes,

Padma Desai, LPC, LMHC Editor, Psychotherapist Associates E-Newsletter

Jonathan Kersun, MD, Chair, Psychotherapist Associates Committee



Padma Desai



Jonathan Kersun

What you'll find in this issue



- A Note from the Chair
- Report from APsaA's 110th Annual Meeting (September 2021)
- Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN) Fall Update
- Save the Date: APsaA's 2022 Winter Conference, February 12-13, 2022, In-Person, New York City, Hotel T.B.A.
- Call for E-Newsletter contributions

A Note from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for taking some time to check out our Fall 2021 Psychotherapist Associates E-Newsletter. Thank you to Padma Desai, Editor and APsaA staff, Debbie Steinke and Bronwyn Zevallos for their outstanding work compiling and editing the document. We are proud to be Associate members of this organization, as it represents an important role in the future of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Since our last newsletter in Spring 2021, we had the virtual annual meeting in September 2021. At that meeting we sponsored a very well attended Session entitled Psychodynamic Treatment of Addiction presented by Chris DiOrio LPC, CAADC, a graduate of the psychotherapy program of the Philadelphia Center of Psychoanalysis and Fred Baurer, MD as discussant. Fred is an analyst with the Philadelphia Center of Psychoanalysis and has authored the soon to be published *Psychodynamic Treatment with the Addicted Person*. Fred has many years of experience applying psychodynamic principles to the treatment of addicted individuals. Chris presented a fascinating case of an individual with substance use who he is working in dynamic treatment. A rich and lively discussion was had, and, I think, all came away feeling educated. It was great!

On a different note, I have recently been appointed to the APsaA Membership Committee. The chair of this committee is Dan Prezant, Ph.D., and it has been great to work with him. Dan is one of the leaders of APsaA and a real “mover and shaker.” He is very committed to making APsaA more egalitarian and very much wants Psychotherapist Associates and other Associate members to have full membership status within the organization. Dan has a wonderful idea to develop peer support groups for APsaA membership and beyond. Capped at about 15 people per group, these groups would provide a space for APsaA, Associates and non-APsaA members to talk with peers about any issues of concern. There are no rules about who can belong and who can't. We are in the process of developing these groups, so “stay tuned.” As you can see, Psychotherapist Associates is involved in some good stuff. If anyone has suggestions about other content, please reach out to me.

Jonathan Kersun, MD
Chair, Psychotherapist Associates
kersun@mac.com

Report from the 110th Annual Meeting (September 2021):

Reflections on Lying

Due to the societal and personal consequences of the current lying epidemic, I attended sessions focused on understanding lies in the greater world *and* the treatment room: “The Big Lie” and “Lying, the Liar, and the Lied To.” Presenters highlighted the basis for and impact of the “stolen election” message after the November 2020 Presidential election and discussed clinical manifestations and implications of treating patients who lie.

Bonnie Litowitz chaired “The Big Lie”, and said the topic emerged in the aftermath of the large-scale campaign to discredit the 2020 presidential election results and the voting process itself before and after Donald Trump’s defeat. In a fascinating reference to a recent book, *From Darwin to Demagogue*, she underscored how social media messages replicate way faster than genes, and that change, and action can be instantaneous in contrast to genetic evolution that takes generations. The lightning speed with which “election fraud” and the “stolen election” messages were transmitted via self-reinforcing digital images resulted in actions such as the Cyber Ninja audit in Arizona and ultimately, the January 6th insurrection. She noted that speech’s three functions are conveying information, affect and appeal. Conversely, it is likely lies become “alternative facts” by merging affect, expectation and appeal. For example, falsehoods about the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccine have tremendously impeded public health due to widespread vaccine refusal that obstructs herd immunity.

Salman Akhtar divided lies into several categories: Untruths, half-truths, bending the truth, and embellishing the truth. He said there are “necessary lies” that include lies associated with one’s profession, (i.e. acting) and ‘lifesaving lies” required to prevent death (i.e. lying to an active shooter to defuse the situation). There are also “good lies”, including lies of altruism (i.e. Christians hiding Jews during the Holocaust) and social lies to prevent emotional hurt (i.e. not confronting a demented person about his/her spouse’s death or failing memory). He delineated “bad lies” such as narcissistic lies to avoid shame or inflict punishment to retaliate for a bruised ego, sadistic lies for the sake of being hurtful, sociopathic lies to exploit, gain advantage or power, and “unnecessary lies” in which a person compulsively conceals or distorts hated truths to avoid reality and survive. The “unnecessary” liar *is unable to tell the truth*, due to intolerable early experiences and therefore has significant clinical implications. Dr. Akhtar distinguished “initial session” lies that usually requires confrontation from gradual lies emerging in the transference that necessitates reconstruction followed by interpretation.

These clinical issues were beautifully addressed in the second session, “Lying, the Liar, and the Lied To.” Panelists explored the challenges presented by a patient’s repeated or compulsive lies. I will not describe case presentations and instead, summarize ways in which psychodynamic therapists can understand and utilize the patient’s lies to advance treatment. The program Chair and discussant, Jane Kite, began by asking what being lied to means in the context of treatment. She noted that Bion said one basis for lying can be the patient’s unconscious defenses. Possible contributing factors to a patient’s lying are inadequate early objects (i.e. parents who falsely nurture) who may provide a measure of containment, but the child perceives its insincerity. Other possible sources of lying include shame (often intergenerational), family secrets, self-protection from anticipated punishment for disclosing the truth, or dissociation. If lying emerges in the transference, it is crucial to recognize or otherwise risk “highjacking the patient’s experience of self-discovery” if confronted prematurely. Kite and other presenters identified therapists’ countertransference reactions: uncertainty, doubt, confusion and suspicion that can signal the patient’s duplicity. Ben Kafka described this as “forensic countertransference,” based on suspiciousness or confusion - an awareness “something isn’t right” in the story. Though forensic countertransference may tempt us to “pounce,” Kafka said it is crucial to find ways to work it through and apply it to help the patient discover his/her painful truths.

As we negotiate a world in which there are dueling “realities,” these two compelling sessions were timely reminders of the importance of authenticity in society *and* our therapeutic encounters.

Margo P. Goldman MD
margogoldmanmd@gmail.com

Update from The Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)

New Initiatives

PsiAN has launched a mentorship program to connect with undergraduate students with an interest in psychology and mental health. We want to offer these young students a personalized connection and novel way to get information on the field and potential career paths. We were concerned to learn that the American Psychological Association has been going into colleges and even high schools to tell

young students that psychology is a STEM subject – so we see the PsiAN mentorship program as an important counterbalance. If you're interested in being a mentor, let us know!

In honor of William S. Meyer, a mentor, teacher, therapist and dedicated advocate for depth therapy, we added Bill to our list of eminent [Advisors](#), and also launched the William S. Meyer Book Club. Until his untimely death a few months ago, Bill was the Director of Training for Social Work and an Associate Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Obstetrics and Gynecology at Duke University Medical Center. Throughout his career, Bill has shown deep dedication to his profession — caring deeply for his patients, and bringing others into the profession, through his teaching and mentoring. Read this [wonderful interview of Bill](#) to get a sense of his humility, intelligence, compassion, and dedication to mentorship. We are not alone in missing Bill each and every day.

Our Book Club groups meet once a month for a duration of three months — a small commitment for a great experience. Our first book is [Saving Talk Therapy: How Health Insurers, Big Pharma, and Slanted Science are Ruining Good Mental Health Care](#), by PsiAN Advisor Enrico Gnoulati, Ph.D. To join the book club, just drop us an email at hello@psian.org.

PsiAN in the News

Co-Founder Linda Michaels wrote a playful, yet serious, article about the experience of Talkspace suing her and PsiAN: [After being sued by Talkspace, I never thought I'd be agreeing with them. Or am I?](#) Medium upgraded her article and published it in their Noteworthy section, where articles are showcased and handpicked by their staff.

We made it into the *New York Times*! In August 2021, Co-Founder Linda Michaels was featured, photo and all, in an important article on mental health parity, [Teachers, Police, and Other Public Workers Left Out of Mental Health Coverage](#). She is quoted throughout the article on the ways in which insurance coverage falls far short of covering mental health, especially for the employees of the City of Chicago -- our first responders in this pandemic.

Again! In June 2021, Co-Founder Linda Michaels was quoted in a *New York Times* article [Something Bothering You? Tell It to Woebot](#). Woebot is a therapy app that uses AI to deliver CBT-style therapy. "These apps really shortchange the essential ingredient that — mounds of evidence show — is what helps in therapy, which is the therapeutic relationship," Linda said.

And again! In May 2021, *The NYT* published ["Drugstore Therapy: The Wrong Approach,"](#) a letter that PsiAN's Co-Chairs wrote in response to an [article](#) on bringing "retail therapy" to the masses. "While we face a growing mental health pandemic following the Covid-19 pandemic, the retail offerings from CVS, Walmart and Walgreens are unlikely to help in significant ways," we write. "We know what helps people who are suffering — a trusted relationship with a well-trained professional who will help get to the root of issues."

The PsiAN Forum

As part of our PsiAN Speaks series, here is a [video interview with Todd Essig](#), who is an Advisor to PsiAN. With Natahsa Reynolds, PsyD, Todd discusses what psychotherapies of depth, insight, and relationship can offer, as well as the utility and risks of what he describes as manualized, 'algorithm-based therapies.' They explore the growth of virtual therapies before and during the pandemic and discuss differences in intimacy and vulnerability in on-screen versus in-person therapy relationships. Drs. Essig and Reynolds also touch on complex cultural and social factors that impact human psychology and the field of psychotherapy, as well as the possibility of a national license for psychotherapists.

An informative and foreboding article by Irene Yancher, PsyD: [Lyra Health Limits Access to High-Quality Treatments for "Our Own Good"](#). Lyra Health, a Silicon Valley startup, has raised \$675M+ in funding to connect employees of companies, such as Facebook, to mental health treatment. However, Lyra's clients are actually the corporations — they are the ones who pay for the Lyra service. To succeed, Lyra must make a compelling sales pitch to their corporate clients and also grow

quickly to raise venture capital. It seems that Lyra's main strategy for achieving these goals is to promote cost-minimizing, brief treatments and to disparage high-caliber, long-term treatments it does not offer. Instead of owning its desire to minimize costs, Lyra uses marketing strategies to claim they are limiting care options for our own good.

A take-down of Artificial Intelligence apps and therapy-bots, written by Steven Reidbord, MD, editor of the PsiAN Forum. In [Faking Sincerity](#), Dr. Reidbord provides a brief overview of the history of the quest for computer-generated therapy and concludes that they are no match for the genuine human connection which is the foundation of depth therapy.

In another installment of our PsiAN Speaks series, Bevin Campbell PsyD speaks with [Kirk J. Schneider PhD](#), a member of the PsiAN Steering Committee, licensed psychologist, and leading spokesperson for contemporary existential-humanistic and existential-integrative psychology. In this wide-ranging conversation they discuss his candidacy for president of the American Psychological Association, his vision for the future of psychology, how psychologists might help our fractured nation outside of the consulting room, the role of therapy in transforming trauma into psychological and spiritual growth, and the vital place of existential-humanistic and existential-integrative therapies in our quick-fix world. Dr. Schneider also speaks with deep heart and candor about his personal, life-changing experiences as a patient in depth therapy.

Finally, On June 25, 2021, PsiAN held its first "Forum Live" webinar -- a wide-ranging, fascinating discussion titled [Teletherapy: Where do we go from here?](#) As we all know, teletherapy became a necessity during the pandemic. But teletherapy has a much longer history. It also includes therapy over the phone, and even, in Freud's day, by correspondence on paper. As pandemic restrictions gradually lift, many wonder whether psychotherapy has permanently changed.

Legislative Advocacy Efforts

PsiAN joined the Kennedy Forum Illinois, Inseparable, and other organizations to support the [successful Health is Health Illinois](#) campaign, which is focused on ensuring mental health parity and writing the standards of care, as specified in the Wit v UBH decision, into law. The campaign aims to update Illinois law with clear and commonsense definitions and standards of mental health care in order to decrease costs, reduce homelessness, and save lives. At APsaA's recent webinar on Federal and State Telehealth & Parity, Linda also discussed this important new state law, and the growing legal and regulatory framework that is putting teeth into parity laws. PsiAN is honored to work with APsaA in advocating for more access and real parity for psychoanalytic therapies.

Linda Michaels, PsyD MBA
Co-Founder
lindamichaels@psian.org



Upcoming Events:

APsaA's 2022 Winter Conference, February 12-13, 2022, In-Person, New York City. More Information to be Posted Soon on the APsaA Website!

<https://www.apsameeting.org>

Are you interested in contributing to the next Newsletter?

Are you interested in writing a summary of one of the in-person panels or workshops at the **APsaA 2022 Winter Conference**? Do you have any other contributions in mind that you think might be of interest to fellow Psychotherapist Associates, such as articles about books or movies, talks or research reports?

Please contact Padma Desai, LPC, LMHC (padma@padmadesai.com) with suggestions, inquiries, or regarding contributions to the Psychotherapy E-Newsletter.

Information: Please click on the link for information about joining APsaA's [Psychotherapist Associates](#). Benefits include a discounted meeting fee. Or contact APsaA's Associate and Membership Services Coordinator, Bronwyn Zevallos (membadmin@apsa.org) for more information.

To view back issues of the Psychotherapy E-newsletter, visit:
<https://apsa.org/content/psychoanalytic-psychotherapy> (scroll to the bottom of the page)

11/30/2021

American Psychoanalytic Association | 309 East 49th St | New York, NY 10017 | 212-752-0450
apsa.org