



# CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

*Promoting Excellence in Mental Health Services*

## **California Institute for Mental Health Attends NIMH National Meeting in Washington, DC**

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Bill Carter, LCSW and Roberto Ramos, M.A. represented CIMH at the recent third annual meeting of the Constituency Outreach and Education Program (COEP) of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in Washington, DC.<sup>1</sup> CIMH is California's COEP partner, one of 51 non-profit partner organizations from each state and the District of Columbia.

The COEP is a nationwide NIMH communications initiative designed to help close the gap between mental health research and practice and reduce the stigma of mental illness. The program is a key element in a broader effort by NIMH to deliver science-based information on mental health to the public and health professionals, and thus to improve the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses among all Americans.

At the April 28-30, 2002 annual meeting of COEP, CIMH heard presentations on the latest mental health research from a range of experts. Mr. Carter suggested that these provided him with "exposure to the most up to date research results and a variety of outreach efforts throughout the United States and created a rich environment for the exchange of information."

Plenary sessions began with a keynote address from NIMH Acting Director Richard Nakamura, Ph.D., discussing the Institute's priorities, programs, and recent events of interest. A panel then focused on bipolar disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder in children and adolescents, including differential diagnosis and treatment issues. Scientific presenters on the panel were John S. March, M.D., M.P.H., researcher and director of Programs in Child and Adolescent Anxiety Disorders and Psychopharmacology at Duke University Medical Center; and Ellen Leibenluft, M.D., chief of the NIMH Pediatrics and Developmental Neuropsychiatry Branch and intramural investigator with the institute's Mood and Anxiety Disorders Program. The panel continued as NIMH COEP partners from Utah and Ohio joined a representative from the Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation, to share their outreach experiences to schools, the juvenile justice system, parents, and practitioners.

A panel the following day traced core issues in schizophrenia from genetic research through supported employment programs, in presentations from Daniel R. Weinberger, M.D., chief of the Clinical Brain Disorders Branch of the NIMH Intramural Research Program; and Anthony F. Lehman, M.D., M.S.P.H., professor and chair of the Department of Psychiatry and director of the Center for Mental Health Services Research at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Howard H. Goldman, M.D., Ph.D.,

<sup>1</sup> NIMH is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Federal Government's primary agency for biomedical and behavioral research. NIH is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



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also from the University of Maryland, who holds positions as professor of psychiatry at the School of Medicine, director of Mental Health Policy Studies, and co-director of the Center for Mental Health Services Research, moderated the panel. Dr. Goldman was the scientific editor of the landmark Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health released in December 1999.

After each day's panel, breakout sessions enabled participants to exchange ideas and experiences. The focus was on transferring research results to health practitioners and the public, and combating stigma. Regarding stigma, Mr. Ramos informed the COEP partners during one of the breakout sessions that CIMH was creating an anti-stigma and education outreach mental health public service announcement (PSA) targeting California's Latino community. The PSA will be available to all of the COEP partners.

The latest epidemiological studies were presented by Ronald C. Kessler, Ph.D., professor of health care policy at Harvard Medical School, in a talk titled "What Are the Numbers and What Do They Mean?" A presentation by William B. Lawson, M.D., Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Howard University College of Medicine, addressed increasing cultural awareness among professionals. This topic was especially relevant to California's ethnic minority populations, including Latino/Hispanic Americans, African American, Asian American, American Indians, and rural populations.

A new feature of this year's meeting was especially successful — two poster sessions by COEP partners, illustrating the use of NIMH information and materials to target key audiences. CIMH presented its "Latino Mental Health PSA" as part of the poster session on outreach to minorities and other special populations. Other states showcased efforts to reach, women, Hispanic/Latino Americans, African American, Native American, Alaska Natives, South Asian, Amish, and the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. Another poster session focused on outreach to adults who can improve the mental health of children and adolescents (teachers, parents, primary care professionals and pediatricians, and others), as well as outreach to students directly.

In addition to the COEP partners, attendees at the meeting included National Partner mental health organizations, and more than 25 other national professional, advocacy and consumer organizations involved in mental health, general health, medicine, education, and academia, as well as specific populations such as minorities, children and youth, and older adults.

For more specifics about mental health information and resources in California, go to the CIMH website at [www.cimh.org](http://www.cimh.org) under the NIMH project listing, or contact Bill Carter at (916) 556-3480 ext. 130 or [bcarter@cimh.org](mailto:bcarter@cimh.org) or Roberto Ramos at (916) 556-3480 ext. 121 or [rramos@cimh.org](mailto:rramos@cimh.org). Information about COEP and the National Institute of Mental Health is available at [www.outreach.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.outreach.nimh.nih.gov).