



RAP NEWS

THE RECOGNITION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

September 2010

Visit www.rapprogram.org



Our Mission

The Recognition and Prevention (RAP) Program was established January of 1998. We are a research clinic funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Our mission is to prevent the development of serious mental illness and to promote healthy functioning.

Program Updates

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since the last edition of *RAP News* has reached your mailbox. It has been a busy year and we would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the many new projects underway at the RAP Program.

Our grant funded projects have allowed us to add new research procedures and treatment options that will further our insight into how the brain develops and what the best treatments are to prevent the onset of serious mental illness. These new projects are described in detail below.

Family Focused Treatment is a new therapy option available at the RAP Program that is part of a research project. In therapy sessions, family members work together to learn more about symptoms and how to prevent them, reducing stress, improving communication skills, and problem solving techniques. Families are randomly selected to receive 3 or 18 sessions.

In addition to the structural magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technique that we have been using, we have added a **functional MRI (fMRI)** component to our study. Whereas the structural MRI simply takes pictures of your brain, the fMRI provides us with information of the function of your brain - what regions are activating or deactivating while you perform different tasks. During the fMRI, you will be performing tasks while the machine is recording your brain activity.

Through a new study we have expanded our **EEG** procedures. An EEG is a safe procedure that has been used for years in research to look at brain activity. We will be placing an elastic cap (almost like a swimming cap) on your head in order to measure this activity. The cap has several sensors on it that will be filled with a gel. In the new project we are interested in how the brain responds to different sounds. While you are wearing the cap you will hear some sounds presented through earphones and will be asked to make simple decisions about them.

D-Serine is an amino acid that exists naturally in the brain. The substance is currently being studied as a possible natural alternative to medication. It is thought that D-Serine could improve some symptoms, such as low mood, sleep problems, difficulty thinking clearly, and lack of interest in activities. Participants in the D-Serine research project attend weekly meetings with the RAP staff for regular check-ins.

As always, participants are compensated for their time and effort in research procedures. Please contact Ruth Olsen at (718) 470-8154 if you are interested in learning more about these exciting opportunities.

Meet Our New Staff

This year our RAP team has continued to grow. We are excited to introduce our new staff members!

Stephanie Snyder, Psy.D. has joined our team as a full-time clinical interviewer. Dr. Snyder is also responsible for coordinating research follow-up interviews. Dr. Snyder received her doctoral degree in School & Community Psychology at Hofstra University.

We have added three full-time research coordinators to our team. Miranda Farabaugh, M.A. received her masters degree in Clinical Psychology at Towson University. She will be assisting with neuropsychological testing and analysis. Jeremy Chang, M.A. will be assisting with ERP and MRI procedures as well as data analysis. He received his masters degree in General Psychology from Stonybrook University. Jonathan Goodman, B.A., a graduate of Emory University, has joined our team as a full-time assistant research coordinator. He will participate in a variety of tasks that support the various projects underway at RAP.

We say goodbye and good luck to research coordinator Christian Fyfe, M.A. who has moved on to continue with his education.



CONGRATULATIONS

We are proud to report that this year we celebrate the graduations of **15** current RAP Program members from Middle School, High School, and College!

This Fall RAP Program members will be transitioning to NYC specialized high schools, selective colleges on scholarship, work training programs, and culinary school!

We also acknowledge RAP Program members who continue to excel in athletic, artistic, and technical extra-curricular activities, internships, and study-abroad experiences.

Keep up all your hard work! We look forward to hearing about many more of your accomplishments in the upcoming school year.



Dear Dr. RAP,
My mom keeps nagging me about not getting enough sleep. Is this a problem I should be worried about?
Thanks, Night Owl



Dear Night Owl,
Sleep is a tremendously important daily activity for every human being! Not getting proper sleep can limit your ability to learn and concentrate, can make you more irritable with your friends and family, cause you to eat too much and lead to weight gain, and can lead to illness and unsafe driving. In order to function at their best, adolescents should be receiving approximately 9 hours of sleep each night. During adolescence many people experience changes to their internal body clocks, which cause them to fall asleep and wake up later. While you can't change your internal body clock there are several behavioral changes you can make to improve your sleep hygiene, which are listed below. These suggestions were taken from the American Psychological Association and National Sleep Foundation websites where you can go for more information (www.apa.org, www.sleepfoundation.org).

- Go to bed at the same time each night.
- Keep your room cool, quiet, and dark.
- Use your bed only for sleeping. Don't eat, watch television, do homework, hang out in bed.
- Shut off the computer, television, and telephone at least an hour before bed.
- If you write a to-do list before bed you will be less likely to stay awake stressing about things you need to get done.
- Avoid caffeine after 2pm.
- If needed, take a power nap of no longer than 20 minutes.

Sweet Dreams! Sincerely, Dr. RAP

RAP Program Follow-Ups

Completing routine follow-ups is one of our main goals at the RAP Program. It is important for us to keep in touch with everyone who passes through our program, to follow how they are doing, and to hear about where their lives have taken them. Follow-ups are completely voluntary, and you do get compensated for your time.

If you have not been contacted, please call Dr. Stephanie Snyder at (718) 470-8616.

Creativity Corner Artistic Contribution from a RAP Program Member

Teenagers

*Why can't people see that us teenagers are great?
We might not be perfect, but we all make mistakes.*

*We have many talents and brains full of knowledge.
We have an endless imagination, and the chance to go to college.*

We are the kids of the future, is what some people say.

And we also are the youth of today.

*Our decisions can impact the world.
It doesn't matter who, boy or girl.*

*We can do anything we set our minds to.
And all those who look down on us, well, we'll prove them wrong too.*

*And this poem is proof that us teens are special.
It also proves that we have true potential.*

*So don't underestimate us teens anymore.
Because we have our whole life to explore.*

If you would like to see your artistic contribution in the next edition please submit materials to Dr. Candan at kcandan@nshs.edu.

RAP Outreach and Education

With the support of a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we continue to expand our efforts to implement prevention in the community at large. A major part of that effort involves community education and outreach with individuals and groups who work with young people and families. This involves education about ways to improve the recognition of early warning signs of mental illness and includes discussions of new approaches to prevention.

Feel free to contact Gary Brucato, Ph.D. at (718) 470-8536 with:

- Comments, questions or suggestions.
- To schedule an educational outreach session.
- For reading material about our program, our resources, and the early warning signs of mental illness.

WANTED FOR SCIENCE & FUN

HEALTHY PARTICIPANTS AGES 12-25

We are always looking for healthy participants ages 12-25 to complete clinical interviews, cognitive tests, biological measures, and periodic follow-up evaluations. All participants are paid for their time and effort in research procedures.

