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TREATMENT WORKS | RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

WWW.ALABAMAPSYCH.ORG

## Deadline to sign up for APA's mental health registry is Dec. 15

APA is committed to helping psychiatrists navigate the landscape of quality reporting and measurement-based care.

To do so, APA has launched PsychPRO, the Psychiatry Patient Registry Online, a **free benefit to members** that will help psychiatrists:

- Track and demonstrate a high level of care.
- Avoid payment penalties and instead achieve bonuses for meeting CMS quality reporting requirements. (Do you need to report? Find out at [Qpp.cms.gov/participation-lookup](http://Qpp.cms.gov/participation-lookup).)
- Reduce the burden of submitting Performance-in-Practice data and obtaining ABPN MOC Part IV credit to maintain board certification and hospital credentialing.

**Sign up by December 15** to be eligible to report for CMS' MIPS program through PsychPRO for 2017. Avoid 2018 penalties now – it's as simple as reporting one quality measure for one patient.

Visit [psychiatry.org/registry](http://psychiatry.org/registry) or email APA at [registry@psych.org](mailto:registry@psych.org).

## Birmingham psychiatrist to serve APA Assembly

At the November APA Assembly in Washington, D.C., Paul O'Leary, MD, was elected recorder and nominated for speaker-elect of the APA Assembly.

"I feel fortunate to be able to interface with our local government officials, and work on expanding our communities access to mental health care," O'Leary said.

Dr. O'Leary sees outpatients at Cooper Green and inpatients at the University of Alabama Birmingham Hospital. He is a board certified in adult, child and adolescent, and forensic psychiatry.

Additionally, he volunteers his time and effort as a member of the APA, where he serves on a number of committees and holds positions in the Assembly and the American Medical Association.

O'Leary is the APA Area 5 Assembly Representative and serves on the Legislative and Public Affairs Committee of the Alabama Psychiatric Physicians Association.

His involvement in organized medicine allows him to continue to advocate at the local, state and national level for improved access mental health care.



## Fellowship applications available at APA

APA/APAF fellowships provide psychiatry **residents** and **early career psychiatrists** the experiential learning, training, and professional development they need to be leaders in the field of psychiatry. The fellowship programs offer opportunities to work with Congress on health policy, conduct research of your design, expand access to care to minority and underserved populations, focus on child psychiatry or substance abuse, and much more. In addition, APA Fellows get exclusive opportunities to be a part of APA leadership councils and network with APA members from around the country.

**Applications are due Jan. 31. [Learn more.](#)**

## WHAT'S UP AROUND THE STATE...

## Birmingham



## BIRMINGHAM PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



For More information about the Birmingham Psychiatric Society, contact BPS President Paul O'Leary, MD, at [dr.paul@me.com](mailto:dr.paul@me.com).

## Central Alabama

For More information about the Central Alabama Society, contact Linda Teel at (334) 288-9009 ext. 207 or [linda.teel@mpa1040.com](mailto:linda.teel@mpa1040.com).



## Mobile Bay



The Mobile Bay Psychiatric Society has re-organized. Serving as co-presidents *protem* are W. Bogan Brooks, MD, and Hal Veits, MD. For more information

e-mail [wbrooks@altapointe.org](mailto:wbrooks@altapointe.org), or [hveits@gmail.com](mailto:hveits@gmail.com).

## Tuscaloosa

If you live in the Tuscaloosa area and would like to get connected with your fellow colleagues, check out the Tuscaloosa



Chapter of APPA. Contact Thaddeus Ulzen, MD, at [tulzen@cchs.ua.edu](mailto:tulzen@cchs.ua.edu) for more information. 🌐

# APA announces candidates for 2018 election

The slate of psychiatrists chosen to compete for officer and trustee positions on APA's Board in the 2018 election is made up of experienced psychiatrists from a broad range of specialties, practice settings, and geographic areas who have made their mark in the field. See the list of candidates at [www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org).

The nominations were put forth by APA's Nominating Committee, chaired by Immediate Past President Maria A. Oquendo, MD, PhD, and announced in mid-October. All of the winning candidates will take office at the close of the **2018 APA Annual Meeting** in May in New York.

All members for whom APA has a valid email address on file will receive an electronic ballot. Other members will receive a paper ballot along with instructions on how to vote online. All candidates as well as their supporters are strongly urged to review APA's recently updated **Election Guidelines**.

Voting will begin on Jan. 2, 2018, at 5 a.m. and end on Jan. 31, 2018, at 12:59 p.m. 🌐

# Mobile Infirmary nixes inpatient psych care

[Lagniappe.com](http://Lagniappe.com)

The only area hospital offering inpatient psychiatric treatment for adults will end those services next month – leaving AltaPointe as the area's only such provider and public safety officials concerned with growing gaps in Alabama's mental health system.

According to Mental Health America, inpatient psychiatric service allows a period during which patients can be "closely monitored to provide an accurate diagnosis or adjust or stabilize medications but also during acute episode when a person's mental illness temporarily worsens."

Mobile Infirmary announced in mid November it would no longer be providing those services for adults under the age of 65 and would be transitioning the 17 beds in its current unit to similar geriatric psychiatric units in Mobile and Bay Minette that exclusively treat patients 65 and older.

In a statement to *Lagniappe*, a representative of Mobile Infirmary said the shift was part of a continuing commitment to serving a "rapidly growing senior citizen patient population."

"This means that each one of the local hospitals and emergency departments now provide the same capabilities and capacity for adult psychiatric patients," Infirmary's statement reads. "All emergency departments in Alabama are qualified and have the capability to medically screen and stabilize a potential psychiatric patient under Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act." Enacted in 1986, EMTALA is an unfunded congressional mandate requiring emergency departments to stabilize and treat any patient regardless of his or her insurance status or ability to pay.

In other words, like other area hospitals, Infirmary will still be able take in emergency psychiatric patients and triage their medical needs. However, for those requiring an extended stay, the only remaining option in Mobile and Baldwin counties is AltaPointe.

While 17 fewer beds might not seem like many, it's a continuation of a trend many hoped had peaked with the closure of Searcy Hospital in 2012. To put it in perspective, those 17 beds were 10 percent the total beds still available for adult psychiatric patients in coastal Alabama.

While AltaPointe is one of the largest behavioral health care systems in the nation, it only has around 182 beds dedicated to inpatient psychiatric care locally. The trouble is, 100 of those are for children, and of the remaining 82 adult beds, 16 are not in service due to lack of funding.



# Adapting to Change

# Fall Conference Wrap-up



## ECP, RFM, Medical Student Mini-Conference

Twenty early career psychiatrists, resident fellow members and medical students attended a mini-conference, sponsored by American Professional Agency, Inc., on the Friday before the APPA Fall Conference. Moira Wertheimer, Esq., RN, CPHRM, discussed Risk Management and Behavioral Health; Minimizing Risk When Treating Suicidal and Violent Patients; Risk Management Considerations when Practicing Addiction Psychiatry; and How to Prepare for a Deposition.



## Mental Illness Awareness Week

APPA Executive Director Jennifer Hayes presents President Tarak Vasavada, MD, DFAPA, with a gubernatorial proclamation naming Oct. 1-7 Mental Illness Awareness Week in the State of Alabama.



## Department of Mental Health

Following lunch at the Fall Conference, Lynn Beshear, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health, gave an update on the department's efforts to make the department relevant in Alabama.



## Poster Presentations

Anna C. Williams, BS, presented a poster titled, "Serotonin Syndrome: Common, but Easily Overlooked."



## Poster Presentations

W. Caleb Wilson, BS, (right) presented a poster titled, "The Interplay Between Depression and Cosmetic Surgery."



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# Tuscaloosa County Jail takes proactive approach to combat mental health

[WBRC.com](http://WBRC.com)

The growing problem with mental health in our state prisons trickles down to the local level, too. The Tuscaloosa County Jail is dealing with mental health issues within its own facility.

Tuscaloosa County Sheriff Ron Abernathy said the biggest issue they're faced with is due to the lack of mental health facilities on the state level, a lot of those people end up in our community and flood our county jail.

About 30 percent of inmates, he said, suffer from some sort of mental illness or addiction.

"What an injustice it is for somebody to be in a jail facility because of a medical problem," said Abernathy.

Imagine someone getting sick and instead of being taken to the hospital, the system says no we're going to take you to jail. Sheriff Ron Abernathy believes that's not acceptable.

"Here in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, being the capital of mental health in the state of Alabama, we need to be able to address that problem," said Abernathy.

His staff is, by using a proactive approach. Abernathy said they've trained deputies to spot mental illness, out on the streets.

"Take people with mental health issues straight to mental health facilities instead of jail like it used to in the past," said Abernathy.

Marisa Giggie, MD, is the jail psychiatrist and evaluates and treats mentally ill inmates, she works closely with deputies to catch it.

"I don't operate in a vacuum. I work with a team and they let me know what's going on. The staff has been trained on what to look for and they are pretty sensitive to issues of depression and suicide risks," said Giggie.

Giggie shares with me how some inmates have told her they purposefully get re-arrested just to get mental health services in the jail that aren't always available outside.

"This is the most vulnerable population that we have and if we don't address these issues we're going to pay for it down the line," said Giggie.

Abernathy said they've also brought in a social work case manager that deals with their long-term mentally ill inmates.

The Tuscaloosa County Mental Health court is available to help some of the inmates transition and continue treatment once their stabilized. 

## Mobile Infirmery continued

Some patients can seek those services voluntarily but AltaPointe also takes involuntary admissions under petition from the Mobile County Probate Court.

April Douglas, AltaPointe's director of public relations, said it was "alarming and concerning" that a metropolitan area the size of Mobile would soon have no hospitals with the ability to serve adult patients suffering from acute psychiatric illnesses.

"AltaPointe has the capacity to open up the needed bed space we just do not have the financial ability to operate," she added.

Douglas did say AltaPointe provides psychiatric consultation services for eligible patients in Mobile area hospitals but only provides inpatient care at its own facilities in Mobile and Daphne.

*Lagniappe* has previously reported that as mental health care facilities close, many patients often go without the care they need. When those individuals wind up on the streets, local law enforcement agencies, first responders and jails are typically left to pick up the slack.

Mobile Public Safety Director James Barber said that can create very difficult situations for police. In addition to being a threat to officers and the public, Barber said individuals experiencing a psychotic episode are also suffering a potentially fatal medical emergency themselves.

According to Barber, current MPD protocol calls for officers to transport subjects in need of psychiatric care to the nearest emergency room. He said the department's training focuses on minimizing injury, de-escalation and on how to proceed once a situation has been stabilized.

"We work on making sure officers can do triage and determine whether Metro Jail is appropriate or maybe a hospital, depending on the individual situation," Barber added. "However, law enforcement officers are often in situations where the only option they have is to incarcerate these individuals in local jails, which we understand is not what they need."

Since city leaders were made aware of Infirmery's plan to limit psychiatric care options, Barber has been meeting with the leadership of stakeholding agencies in the area, including officials overseeing the Mobile County Metro Jail and the leadership at AltaPointe.

Including those dealing with substance abuse, Barber said roughly one-third of all the inmates in Mobile Metro Jail have some kind of mental illness. That's not uncommon in a state where around 20 percent of the prison population receives some kind of mental health treatment.

Alabama is attempting to revamp those services after a federal court ruling found "woefully inadequate mental health care" available in state prisons inflicts "real, concrete and terribly permanent harm" on mentally ill prisoners.

Asked about Infirmery's decision to scrap its adult inpatient unit, Mobile County Health Director Bert Eichold described it as yet another reason state officials should look into reopening Searcy Hospital — an idea he's floated to Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey.

If the Alabama Department of Mental Health were to find the funding, Eichold said, reopening Searcy in Mount Vernon — a facility the state still owns — would quickly increase the area's capacity for psychiatric care by as many as 100 beds.

"My proposal was to turn Searcy into a correctional facility for nonviolent offenders who have mental issues or substance abuse problems," Eichold said. "This is the time to help with overcrowding in Alabama's correctional facilities and to take care of our residents with mental health issues. Searcy is an asset of the state that could help in either in situation." 

SAVE *the* DATE

## Coming Attractions

### 2018 APPA Spring Conference

April 20-21 | Birmingham Marriott, Grandview Parkway

### 2018 APPA Fall Conference

October 26-27 | Battle House, Mobile

### 2019 APPA Spring Conference

April 5-7 | Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, Florida

### 2019 APPA Fall Conference

September 27-28 | Bohemian Hotel, Mountain Brook

### 2020 APPA Spring Conference

April 3-5 | Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, Florida

## APA News Briefs

### December Course of the Month

Each month, APA members have free access to an online CME course on a trending topic. The December course reviews the **MacArthur Violence Risk Assessment Study**, a multidisciplinary effort to identify valid risk factors for violence by people discharged from short-term psychiatric facilities. [Click here](#) to access the course.

### Renew your membership for 2018!

With your support we have accomplished much this past year, from maintaining access to care for patients with mental illness and substance use disorders to launching a Presidential Work Group on physician wellness. Please renew your membership today to help APA continue its important work in the year to come! **As a reminder, the deadline to [renew your membership](#) is Dec. 31, 2017.**

### 2018 APA Annual Meeting Registration

The 2018 APA Annual Meeting is scheduled for May 5-9, 2018, in New York, N.Y. Please make a note of the key registration dates below:

- Member Registration Begins: Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2017
- Nonmember Registration Begins: Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2017
- Early Bird Registration Deadline Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2018

For more information, including housing and travel, go to [psychiatry.org/annual-meeting](http://psychiatry.org/annual-meeting).

### 2018 New Research Poster Submissions

Poster submissions for the 2018 APA Annual Meeting are due by Thursday, Dec. 14, 2017. For more information, go to [psychiatry.org/annual-meeting](http://psychiatry.org/annual-meeting).

### Become an Anniversary Star!

The APA Foundation is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Make a tax-deductible gift with a "\$25" in it to be added to the list of Anniversary Stars appearing online and at the next APA Annual Meeting. Gifts to the Foundation support:

- Mental health in schools, places of worship, the workplace and the justice environment
- Research and training to improve mental health care
- Mental health needs during times of disaster
- Future leaders of psychiatry through fellowships and awards

Learn more at [www.apafdn.org](http://www.apafdn.org).

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