Out of the Shadows

Demystifying mental health services

THERE WAS A TIME when those suffering from a mental health issue found themselves in the dark. There were secrets within family circles, and celebrities certainly did not tweet about their struggles with depression or social anxiety disorder. Social stigmas often kept people from getting the help they needed.

“It was something that people just didn’t talk about,” said Dr. Borislav Meandzija, chief of the Behavioral Health Department. “There have been advances in the field, and it’s all being looked at through a new lens. There have also been treatment advances. In the past, what was the purpose of making a diagnosis if there was no treatment for it?”

Now, approximately 57.7 million adults in the United States report experiencing some mental health disorder in a given year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

If you find that you are no longer enjoying activities you once were or something is interfering with your performance at work, Meandzija said the first thing you should do is contact your primary care clinician to see if this is the result of a medical condition.

The next step would be to seek a consultation with a mental health clinician.

WHAT YALE OFFERS

Magellan Health Services manages Yale University’s Counseling and Support Services program as well as Yale Health’s behavioral health benefit.

When you call Magellan, you will speak to a licensed mental health clinician who will ask about your situation and help direct you to the most appropriate setting. If you are considering seeing a mental health provider, you can also call Yale Health’s Behavioral Health Department at 203-436-5706 or 203-436-5667 during regular office hours to discuss your options.

SHADOWS CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE
Yale and Magellan have worked together to create a network of nearly 300 providers in Connecticut including psychiatrists, psychologists, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), social workers, substance abuse counselors, and marriage and family therapists. All of the providers are licensed and qualified to perform a diagnostic interview. Psychiatrists or APRNs can also write prescriptions.

Yale University’s Counseling & Support Services program offers unlimited phone support and up to six yearly in-person counseling sessions per issue for Yale employees and their family members. This free and confidential service is intended for short-term or singular issues such as stress management, workplace issues or grieving the loss of a loved one.

“People reach out for assistance for a number of different reasons,” said Cheryl Doebrick, PhD, manager of the Behavioral Health Department. “Depending on their needs, a decision would be made on the mental health services best for them.”

For longer term or more severe issues, you would be directed to one of Magellan’s providers as part of your behavioral health benefit as a Yale Health member, which does not have a visitation limit as long as it is deemed medically necessary.

“An issue that persists over a period of time is the one that we’re most concerned about,” Meandzija said. “Anybody, at times, will feel a little anxious, depressed or stressed. It’s the persistence of those concerns or symptoms that requires attention.”

Appointments with a network clinician for non-emergency situations are generally available within a week to two weeks, but it may take a little longer to get an appointment with an adult or child psychiatrist with a busy practice, Doebrick said.

**TYPES OF COUNSELING**

Counseling sessions are relatively standard regardless of the provider type. They are face-to-face conversations during which the provider will ask you about your current concerns, events leading up to these concerns as well as medical and family history.

The first session or two typically lasts 45–60 minutes and is intended to clarify the problem and collaboratively develop a treatment plan. During follow-up sessions, you will have an opportunity to bring up additional issues that are contributing to the problem.

Every treatment plan is individualized and based on your specific needs. Treatment can last for weeks, months or years, but Meandzija said that brief to intermediate courses of treatment are most common, and are very effective for the majority of problems.

Long-term treatment, for chronic mental health problems such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or recurrent major depression, may include frequent counseling sessions in the beginning, but often spreads out to a visit every few months for updates and medication management.

The intensity of your treatment also depends on your situation. Your coverage includes inpatient hospital treatment when necessary, as well as various levels of outpatient treatment.

“Each of the levels of behavioral health care provides an opportunity to talk about your feelings, thoughts, and concerns,” Doebrick said. “That’s what therapy really is.”

![Cheryl Doebrick, PhD, and Borislav Meandzija, MD](shadows-continued-from-previous-page.png)
FROM THE DESK OF PAUL GENECIN, MD

Although I’m sure we would all like to put the memory of the long and trying winter behind us and look forward to what we hope is a beautiful spring and summer, I must reflect on one important event that I feel truly epitomized Yale Health’s commitment to putting our patients first.

When a blizzard blanketed the New Haven area with roughly three feet of snow over a weekend in February, our staff members showed their dedication by braving the elements to ensure adequate coverage for our patients.

Although we cancelled all clinical appointments for two and a half days, a team of roughly 90 staff members including clinicians, nurses, and medical assistants from all primary care departments came to the Yale Health Center to provide support to Acute Care and Inpatient Care, both of which remained open 24 hours a day throughout the storm.

Several staff members walked through the snow to get to the building while nurse managers supplied rides to others who were unable to drive. Some stayed in the Yale Health Center for three straight days, sleeping in 8-hour shifts in the Inpatient Care Department or on cots.

The pharmacy staff filled over 1,000 combined prescriptions in just two days and staff members pitched in providing support in other areas with senior administrative assistants calling patients to help reschedule cancelled appointments.

We had clinicians at Yale-New Haven Hospital throughout the storm with an obstetrician sleeping at the hospital as well as hospitalists and pediatricians continuing their rounds on Yale Health members.

I have had much to be proud of during my 16 years as Director of Yale Health, but one of the things of which I am most proud is our staff’s ability to continually come together to meet the needs of our patients regardless of the obstacles they must face to do so. Health care is a 24-hour a day, 7-day a week, 365-day a year commitment that does not take a break for blizzards or hurricanes.

Nanci Fortgang, RN, assistant director of primary care, may have said it best when describing how we functioned over that long weekend in February.

“You practice drills for situations like this, but when it happens, it comes down to the human side of the staff,” she said. “If you don’t have that, it’s just not going to work.”

Our staff members are some of the most caring and compassionate people I have ever met. They dedicate themselves to our members each and every day, whether it be in a direct clinical setting or through the many roles that support our health care at the Yale Health Center.

Our focus has been, and will always be, providing the best health care possible for members of the Yale community and their families. As long as we continue to work together and keep the best interest of our patients at the forefront, I am confident that focus will remain sharp.

Nanci Fortgang, RN, assistant director of primary care

“You practice drills for situations like this, but when it happens, it comes down to the human side of the staff.”

yalehealth.yale.edu
Breastfeeding is a learned skill and education begins even before your baby is born. "A lot of women focus on labor and giving birth, but they lose sight of the fact that once the baby is here, they're going to be breastfeeding and may not have the time to educate themselves at that point," said Cris Donovan, RN, Pediatrics, and an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant.

Breast milk contains fat, sugar, water, and protein to help your baby grow and provides other nutrients and antibodies that your baby needs to be healthy.

Breastfed babies have been shown to have a lower risk of respiratory infections, asthma, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome. Breastfeeding is linked to lowering the mother’s risk of type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and postpartum depression.

It is also the most convenient and cost-effective way to feed your baby. Breast milk is always at the correct temperature, there are no bottles or nipples to sterilize, and formula and feeding supplies can cost over $1,500 per year.

Once your baby is born, it is recommended that you initiate skin-to-skin contact and breastfeed in the first hour of their life. Babies are very alert at this time and begin showing signs of wanting to breastfeed such as opening their mouth and turning their head to look for your breast, an action called rooting.

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"Getting that initial feeding in is valuable because babies often get very tired in the next 24 hours and are sometimes too sleepy to be interested in breastfeeding," Donovan said. "A good latch and skin-to-skin contact early helps the baby go back to feeding after the initial sleepy period."

If you are having trouble breastfeeding while still in the hospital, there are lactation consultants available to help.

The nurse who is with you through your labor and birth will stay with you and help you position your baby and ensure a deep latch with a large amount of breast tissue in the baby's mouth.

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If you are having trouble breastfeeding while still in the hospital, there are lactation consultants available to help.
Yale Health offers free breastfeeding classes for its members in their 32nd–36th week of pregnancy. Classes take place on the fourth Thursday of every month from 6:00–8:00 pm at the Yale Health Center. To register, visit yalehealth.yale.edu/attend-classes-and-events.

Yale Health also has a private lactation room available on the lower level of the Yale Health Center.

Look for signs that your baby is ready to feed such as smacking their lips, putting their hands to mouth or moving their head to look for your breast. These signs are called feeding cues. Your baby should also determine the duration of each breastfeeding session. If they stop suckling, change their suckling pattern or stop swallowing, they may be finished feeding. Some babies take themselves off of the breast on their own when they have had enough.

A good indicator that your baby is getting enough breast milk is that they are content after feeding, having six urines and three bowel movements per day four days after birth, and have regained their birth weight by their two-week checkup. "The beauty of breastfeeding is that it’s so satisfying and fulfilling to know you are providing for your baby, and the closeness and bond that you have with your baby lasts a lifetime," Donovan said. "The first two weeks can be challenging, but be patient and get the help you need and those things often fall into place."

Yale Health Partners With Yale Maternal-Fetal Medicine

In order to meet the growing demand for women's health and obstetrical services, physicians of Yale Maternal-Fetal Medicine (MFM) are now providing overnight coverage of Yale Health's obstetrical patients in Yale-New Haven Hospital's Labor and Birth suite.

As always, when you are in labor, or for any obstetrical emergency, you should call Yale Health's Obstetrics & Gynecology Department at 203-432-0222, and the call will be taken by one of our staff in Ob/Gyn or Acute Care.

Cancer Care to be Provided at Smilow

Effective July 1st, all cancer care, including chemotherapy, will be provided at Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven or another Smilow Cancer Hospital Care Center location.

This integration of cancer services at Smilow, through its affiliation with the Yale Cancer Center, will provide access to the most innovative cancer research and clinical trials, as well as the latest innovations in diagnosis, treatment, and long-term follow-up care.

WHCRA Services

The Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act (WHCRA) of 1998 provides benefits for mastectomy related services including all stages of reconstruction and surgery to achieve symmetry between the breasts, prostheses, and complications resulting from a mastectomy, including lymphedemas.

Call the Yale Health Care Management Department at 203-436-5791 for more information.
Internal Medicine Now Offering Geriatric Assessment Appointments

HEALTHCARE NEEDS CHANGE AS YOU AGE.
Whether it is changes to your vision or balance, taking preventive measures to ensure your health and safety is imperative.

Dr. Slawomir Mejnartowicz, Internal Medicine, has begun offering geriatric assessment appointments to help you identify possible risk factors and collaborate with you and your family members to help avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and emergency room visits.

During the initial 50-minute assessment, Mejnartowicz may discuss ways to improve your balance to help avoid falls that could result in breaks or fractures, perform cognitive testing and explain how to better utilize social services such as the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, Meals on Wheels, and resources in your community.

Mhnartowicz will also review your medication lists to see if there are prescriptions that could be eliminated or altered.

Appointments require a referral from your primary care clinician, a care manager or Yale Health’s hospitalist. Mejnartowicz will work in collaboration with your primary care clinician to provide your care.

Referrals will be generated for an assessment if there are signs of cognitive impairments, depression, a history of multiple falls or a general failure to thrive at home.

Spouses, children or friends are encouraged to attend the assessment appointment with you.

To schedule an appointment with your primary care clinician to discuss a referral for a geriatric assessment appointment, please call Internal Medicine at 203-432-0038.

New Optometrist Joins Yale Health

John Sisti, OD

John Sisti has joined the Ophthalmology & Optometry Department after spending the last five years providing eye exams and performing minor surgical procedures at Koch Eye Associates in Warwick, RI. He previously also owned his own practice in Osprey, FL, for nearly three years.

He brings over 15 years of experience in the field to Yale Health.

Sisti earned his BA from Brown University in 1976, his doctor of dental surgery degree from Georgetown University in 1982 and his doctor of optometry degree from New England College of Optometry in 1996.

He is also a member of the American Optometric Association.

Briefs

Requesting Medical Records
Health Information Services is your resource for obtaining copies of your medical records and for transferring records from outside medical providers or facilities. Your medical information is protected under HIPAA, so it cannot be released unless you complete and sign a form that authorizes us to release your information.

You can get a copy of the form online at yalehealth.yale.edu/forms.

While most records are processed and released within a few days, it can take up to 30 days to process the request. We encourage you to submit your request in advance and notify Health Information Services if you have an immediate need.

Copies of medical records cost 65 cents per page/image. The first 10 pages are free. There is a flat fee of $75 for insurance companies requesting medical records.

You may choose to receive your medical records on paper or CD.

For more information, contact Health Information Services at 203-432-7741 or visit yalehealth.yale.edu/healthinformationservices.
What is the difference between a radiologist and a technologist?

Radiological technologists are specifically trained to perform diagnostic exams whether it be an ultrasound, CT Scan, MRI or x-ray. They correctly position you for imaging, administer any medications your clinician has ordered, and obtain the images for the radiologist to review.

Technologists are the face of the Diagnostic Imaging Department. They are who you meet and interact with, but cannot provide imaging results to you.

Radiologists are board certified doctors who interpret all imaging modalities. They receive the images from the technologist and provide the report to your ordering clinician who contacts you to discuss the results.

If the radiologist needs additional views, they will ask the technologist to take more images before you leave the Diagnostic Imaging Department.

They are the expert eyes of the department and the clinician relies solely on them to provide the interpretation of the images.

Michael Goulet, PT, MPH, CRA
Manager, Diagnostic Imaging

Making the Rounds
HEALTH AND WELLNESS INFORMATION FROM YALE HEALTH’S CLINICAL STAFF

PHARMACY
How do I properly dispose of my unwanted medications?

If a community-based medication take back program is not readily available, the majority of medications should be disposed of in your household trash after taking the following precautions:

Keep it in its original container, but remove your personal information (name, address and date of birth) with a black marker or remove the label if possible.

Modify the medication to discourage consumption. Add a small amount of water to pills or capsules to partially dissolve them. Add salt, flour, or kitty litter to liquid medications to discourage anyone from ingesting it.

Tape the lid shut and put it in a non-transparent container. You should never dispose of medications in your recycling bin.

If you need to dispose of any used syringes or needles such as diabetic supplies, you should:

Discard them in a hard plastic, opaque container with a cap such as an empty laundry detergent or bleach bottle.

Seal the cap with heavy duty tape.

Label the container as containing “sharps”.

Place the container in your household trash.

The Food and Drug Administration has a small list of medications that are considered extremely harmful and should be flushed down the toilet to avoid any accidental exposure. A complete list of these medications can be found at fda.gov by searching “medication disposal.”

While pharmacies are prohibited by law from accepting any unwanted medications, some local police departments have implemented medication drop boxes where you can drop unwanted medication. You may want to call ahead to confirm what types of medication waste are excluded (sharps, liquids, etc.). To find a local drop-off area, visit ct.gov/deep/medsdisposal.

Joseph Serio, PharmD
Pharmacy

For more on these topics, listen to the complete healthcasts on yalehealth.yale.edu/healthcasts.
KEEP IN MIND

Pharmacy Summer Hours

Tuesday, May 28th through Saturday, August 31st
Monday through Friday
8:30 am–6:00 pm
Saturday
8:30 am–2:30 pm

The pharmacy will be closed on Monday, May 27th in observance of Memorial Day and Thursday, July 4th in observance of Independence Day.