A MODEL OF PROGRESS:
HOW McLEAN TREATS OCD
In February 1997, when McLean’s residential treatment program for obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) was launched, there was a general lack of understanding about the illness and a significant lack of effective treatment. In fact, OCD treatments back then could even make patients’ conditions worse, not better.

However, over the past twenty-plus years, great progress has been made in both treating and learning about OCD. McLean’s Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Institute (OCDI) has helped to lead that improvement through a collaborative model, including cooperation among clinicians, researchers, and patients and their families.

Integrating Clinical Care and Research
When the OCDI opened, we knew we needed to collect data on the experiences our patients were having. Our primary mission is to help people get better, and the only way to optimize that is to collect information. In the early days, research happened on the back end, separate from the clinical work. We felt that integrating treatment and research would be more effective, and the result has been amazing.

In the past, data was collected with paper and pencil and manually entered into a database. We now collect data through a secure online system specifically designed for medical research. This has enabled our OCDI researchers to vastly improve the speed, volume, and precision of data collection, giving us a movie version of what’s happening.

This technological improvement has led to a corresponding acceleration in research and clinical care, including our recent successes with promoting inhibitory learning by modifying traditional exposure and response prevention therapy approaches.

Another important target of current and future research is to revolutionize OCD care by individualizing treatment. Most of what we’ve learned about OCD has come from studying numbers of people and then averaging all of the results. Now we are able to develop a single comprehensive record about a single person’s OCD experience—without too much effort—enabling us to model their OCD.

The Significance of Family Involvement
Getting family members more involved in treatment was one of the earliest goals at the OCDI. With OCD, more than with most other mental health disorders, the families are often very involved in the symptoms.

Family members are often asked by the patient to do things a certain way, and when they comply, they become accommodators of the symptoms. In terms of relapse prevention, we realized that if we weren’t educating and supporting the family simultaneously, we were setting up those patients to fail at home.

Expanding Our Reach
The OCDI has been such a success, and based on statistics that show that many people develop OCD in childhood, we launched an OCD program for children and adolescents. From the day it opened, OCDI Jr. has been operating at full capacity and providing treatment to kids and teens from as far away as Mexico, Zurich, and Montreal. In 2020, we are looking forward to collaborating with Houston OCD, an intensive outpatient program in Texas founded by McLean’s Thröstur Björgvinsson, PhD, ABPP.

The Future of OCD Care
We would like to think that we are close to a cure, but right now we are more focused on enhancing methods for symptom reduction and exploring means of prevention. If we could identify predictors to developing OCD and intervene before a person develops symptoms, rather than just treating people after they get sick, that would be ideal.

Diane Davey, RN, MBA, is the program director and co-founder of the Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Institute (OCDI) at McLean Hospital. The OCDI has been a leader in OCD care and research for over 20 years.
While people around the world may speak different languages and have cultures that are vastly different, there is one thing that affects every community: mental illness and the impact it has on individuals and families.

Through its international education and advocacy efforts, McLean is striving to increase mental health awareness worldwide while reducing the stigma too often associated with psychiatric disorders. By using a thoughtful, multi-pronged approach that includes public and professional education, McLean is working toward enhancing the overall knowledge of brain health and encouraging compassion and understanding for individuals living with mental health conditions.

“McLean has made a global commitment to build collaborations with local organizations that will allow us to work together—in true partnerships—to improve the lives of individuals and families who live with psychiatric illness,” said Scott L. Rauch, MD, president and psychiatrist in chief of McLean. “We look forward to building deep and enduring relationships with global partners as we explore ways in which McLean can be a partner in enhancing mental health care, training, and professional and public education.”

Recently, at the invitation of an Indian-based non-government organization and the government-run Nehru Science Centre (NSC), McLean Hospital began critical work in India—both in educating professionals and in engaging the public in active learning and dialogue about mental illness.

“The rate of depression in India makes it widely recognized as the most depressed country in the world. However, due to stigma, a general lack of awareness about mental health, and limited access to care, fewer than 15% of people seek professional help,” explained Scott J. O’Brien, co-director of McLean’s public education initiative. “The work that we are doing in India is enhancing the understanding of best treatment practices among mental health clinicians while exposing the public to basic mental health information.”

Thanks to a partnership with the Dr. N.S. Vahia Foundation.
and the NSC, McLean developed “Exploring Brain and Mental Health,” an interactive museum exhibit combining information about the brain and mental health with compelling stories of people living with mental illness. The multipart exhibit also allowed visitors to hold a human brain while learning from McLean neuroscientist Stephanie A. Maddox, PhD, and McLean-trained volunteers about how the brain functions and the critical role it plays in mental and physical health.

Among the first visitors to the exhibit were cricket legend Shane Warne; Praveen Pardeshi, additional chief secretary to the chief minister of Maharashtra; and Ranjit Barthakur, executive chairman of the Rajasthan Royals cricket team.

During a press conference held to inaugurate the McLean exhibit, Warne encouraged greater understanding of mental illness and implored people to seek treatment.

“I am deeply touched to be part of such a noble initiative. It’s very important that people start taking mental wellness into consideration,” said Warne. “Mental health is a very serious issue, but all of us go through stuff. I encourage everyone not to hide what you are going through but to express your feelings and speak up. Don’t be afraid.”

Vihang Vahia, MD, founder and president of the Vahia Foundation, was instrumental in ensuring children from all socioeconomic backgrounds had an opportunity to visit the museum and learn about mental health.

“It is critical that we engage children in conversations about these disorders at an early age so that they are educated and aware,” said Vahia. “Through greater education, we believe that as these children get older, they will also have greater compassion for themselves and for others with mental illness.”

McLean’s public education initiative is made possible thanks to the generous support of donors. McLean is now doing mental health education outreach in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, South America, and North America.
As part of its efforts to reverse the opioid crisis that continues to grip the nation, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has named McLean Hospital as a recipient of a grant through the Helping to End Addiction Long-Term Initiative (NIH HEAL Initiative). McLean’s award is one of 375 grant awards across 41 states—totaling nearly $1 billion—made by the NIH in fiscal year 2019 to apply scientific solutions to address the crisis.

In 2016, an estimated 50 million U.S. adults suffered from chronic pain, and in 2018, an estimated 10.3 million people 12 years and older in the United States misused opioids, including heroin. The trans-NIH research effort aims to improve treatments for chronic pain, curb the rates of opioid use disorder (OUD) and overdose, and achieve long-term recovery from opioid addiction.

“It’s clear that a multipronged scientific approach is needed to reduce the risks of opioids, accelerate development of effective non-opioid therapies for pain, and provide more
McLean's research will focus on exploring ways to improve outcomes for patients who use evidence-based medications to treat opioid use disorder.

McLean's research, which is also part of the National Institute on Drug Abuse Clinical Trials Network, will focus on exploring ways to improve outcomes for patients who use evidence-based medications, specifically buprenorphine and naltrexone, to treat OUD.

McLean will partner with researchers from Columbia University and New York University to explore how to increase retention among patients who use these OUD treatments. According to the researchers, such retention is critical for helping more people achieve long-term recovery from OUD.

The research team will also study patients who have been successful with using these medications to treat their OUD and now want to taper off these medications. The researchers will seek to determine who can do this successfully and find optimal methods for doing it.

“We already have medications that are effective at treating OUD,” said Roger D. Weiss, MD, chief of the Center of Excellence in Alcohol, Drugs, and Addiction at McLean Hospital, who is also one of three lead investigators for the study. “However, staying on them isn’t always easy, and weaning off them, for those who choose to do so, can be very difficult. In general, we advise patients to stay on medications, but many people want to discontinue them despite that advice. Learning how to advise those patients is very important.”

The NIH HEAL Initiative is leveraging expertise from almost every NIH institute and center to approach the crisis from all angles and disciplines, and across the full spectrum of research, from basic to implementation science, in the areas of:

- Translation of research to practice for the treatment of opioid use disorder
- New strategies to prevent and treat opioid use disorder
- Enhanced outcomes for infants and children exposed to opioids
- Novel medication options for opioid use disorder and overdose
- Clinical research in pain management
- Preclinical and translational research in pain management
Patients Welcome Spirituality and Religion Into Mental Health Treatment
In a recent paper, McLean Hospital clinicians described the success of the hospital’s new Spiritual Psychotherapy for Inpatient, Residential & Intensive Treatment (SPIRIT) program. The clinicians drew their conclusions from a sample of nearly 1,500 patients.

SPIRIT is an optional program that is available to all patients who come to McLean for mental health care. It integrates religion and spirituality with mental health treatment. According to the paper, many patients have cited the program as a major factor in their treatment success.

“The statistical majority of our patients want to address spirituality in their mental health care, but few clinicians have any training in this area,” said the paper’s author, David H. Rosmarin, PhD, ABPP, director of McLean’s Spirituality and Mental Health Program. To address this need, Rosmarin and his colleagues developed SPIRIT. Its creation was aided by funding from the John Templeton Foundation’s Bridges Consortium.

Many patients have cited the SPIRIT program as a major factor in their treatment success

Paper co-author Brent P. Forester, MD, MSc, said that integrating religion and spirituality with mental health is gaining acceptance among clinicians. “Historically, there has been an unease and tension in the field of psychiatry when it comes to the topic of religion,” he said. “But we have come a long way towards an understanding that spirituality and religion are distinct and that there may be benefits towards asking about the role that spirituality plays in one’s mental health.”

Central to the program are group sessions to help patients explore how their spirituality or religion can be incorporated into their treatment plan and help bring about emotional change. SPIRIT participants also receive handouts about a variety of topics, including ways that prayer, meditation, and sacred verses can work with mental health treatment plans.

McLean’s Hilary S. Connery, MD, PhD, believes that SPIRIT can be particularly helpful for people with highly stigmatized illnesses. Often, she said, patients question whether they have done something wrong that has contributed to the cause of their mental illness.

“Spiritual interventions can be lifesaving for such individuals in correcting inappropriately personalized experiences of ill health, thus allowing them to greatly improve treatment engagement, adherence, and positive outcomes, and to reduce risk for suicide and other stress-related self-harm behaviors,” said Connery.

Forester, chief of McLean’s Division of Geriatric Psychiatry, believes that seniors may benefit from programs like SPIRIT. “Older adults, in particular, suffer from loneliness, anxiety, and depression and face significant medical challenges,” he said. “This population, therefore, may greatly benefit from assessing attitudes about spirituality and the role of spirituality in one’s life.”
Singer and actress Selena Gomez was honored with the 2019 McLean Award at the hospital’s Annual Dinner. Each year, McLean presents the award to individuals who have furthered the public’s understanding of psychiatric illness and mental health. Previous honorees include NFL star Brandon Marshall, ABC news anchor Elizabeth Vargas, and singer Judy Collins.

On accepting the award, Gomez detailed her recent struggles with anxiety and depression. “It felt as though all of my pain, anxiety, and fear washed over me all at once, and it was one of the scariest times of my life,” she said.

Gomez explained how she reached out for help and felt “equal parts terrified and relieved” when she received her diagnosis, “terrified because the veil was lifted but relieved that I finally had the knowledge of why I had suffered with various depressions and anxieties for so many years. I never had full awareness or answers about this condition.”

With a clear diagnosis and a determination to face her challenges, Gomez said that she feels happier and healthier and more in control of her feelings and thoughts. At the dinner, she declared that she wants to use her experience to help others.

“For me, it feels right to share that I have personally felt the effects of both depression and anxiety—but it isn’t easy. I have feared being misunderstood and judged. I know that I have been given experiences and people and opportunities that have made my life exceptionally beautiful and sweet—and yet I struggle with my own thoughts and feelings at times. But this doesn’t make me faulty. This does not make me weak. This does not make me less than. This makes me human. We need help, and we need each other.”

Previous recipients of the McLean Award:
2018  Brandon Marshall, NFL player
2017  ABC News anchor Elizabeth Vargas
2016  Singer Judy Collins
2015  Representative Patrick J. Kennedy
2014  Actress Jane Fonda
2013  Director David O. Russell
2012  Author Patricia Cornwell
2011  Actress Mariel Hemingway
2010  Actress Glenn Close, her sister Jessie Close, and nephew Calen Pick
2009  Astronaut Buzz Aldrin
2008  ABC journalist Lee Woodruff and ABC News anchor Bob Woodruff
Putting people first in mental health care, McLean Hospital is honored to be ranked as the #1 freestanding psychiatric hospital in the country by U.S. News & World Report.

“I wouldn’t be alive today without McLean. Not only did their treatment team give me the skills I need to successfully manage my bipolar disorder, they gave me the confidence I needed to embrace life.” Greta, a thankful patient
McLean Hospital provides professional education opportunities for a wide range of mental health and allied health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, nationally certified counselors, nursing home administrators, and educators. We look forward to seeing you at one of our courses in 2020. For more information, visit mclean.org/continuing-education

**General Psychiatric Management for Adolescents Conference**  
February 28, 2020  
Partners HealthCare  
Somerville, MA

**Post-Traumatic Stress and Related Disorders 2020**  
March 25-28, 2020  
Fairmont Copley Plaza  
Boston, MA

**Addictions 2020 Conference**  
May 1-2, 2020  
Boston Marriott Cambridge Hotel  
Cambridge, MA

**Mentalization-Based Treatment: Practitioner Level Training**  
May 29–30, 2020  
McLean Hospital  
Cambridge, MA

**Mentalization-Based Treatment for Adolescents: Supervisor Level Training**  
May 30–31, 2020  
McLean Hospital  
Cambridge, MA

**Psychiatry 2020 Conference**  
June 4–6, 2020  
Fairmont Copley Plaza  
Boston, MA