

Hope Clinicians Present Cutting Edge Treatment Methods at NADD Conference in November 2015

Staff members from the Hope Counseling Center attended and presented at the three-day NADD, National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (MH and DD) Annual Conference in San Francisco, CA, November 18- 20, 2015.

The conference, organized around the theme of integrating treatment and services for people with intellectual disabilities and mental illness, hosted nearly 400 people from the United States and Canada. Hope Services staff presented at one of the thirty workshops on a submitted for publication study on the treatment of autism and co-occurring mental health disorders. Twenty Hope staff attended, largely supported by Hope's continuing education funding, as well as volunteer opportunities.

Dr. Susan Detrick, Anna Fernandez (LMFT), Clementine Do (MFTI) and Eric Lee (MFTI) presented results from a several year-long project treating 116 clients with autism and co-occurring mental health disorders. The project aimed to improve access to mental health services for clients with Autism, diagnose a treatable mental health disorder, if present, and describe demographic information and satisfaction with services, while enabling descriptions of successful treatment of people with mental health disorders in co-occurring autism.

"The SAPPA program we implemented opened the door to acceptance of clients with autism and co-occurring mental health disorders into our public mental health community" said Detrick. "There have been blocks to provision of mental health services for people with autism, both kids and adults and the treatment that we presented demonstrated that real change can occur."

Clementine Do's presentation focused on the use of art therapy techniques to assist people with limited verbal skills to express themselves and help with understanding therapeutic needs. Subsequent to the art therapy, Clementine showed that evidence based practices can then be used to provide behavioral stability and improved functioning. Eric Lee focused on the integration of two evidence-based therapeutic modalities as a way of reducing disruptive behaviors and challenging irrational thought processes and pathogenic beliefs that impede wellness. These were cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy. Detailed clinical presentations showed participants how to do these particular therapeutic strategies. Do has been with Hope Services since 2006 since she graduated from UCLA. She has since earned a master's degree from Notre Dame. Lee has worked at Hope for two years following his bachelor's degree from Northwestern and master's degree from John F. Kennedy University.

"Seeing the presentation really encouraged me because the work presented was so similar to what I have been doing in my sessions with clients," said Chelsea Valle, a Hope Services clinician. "I am really inspired by how Hope Services helps me make a difference in people's lives."

Other staff members attended a variety of workshops designed to assist in helping treat the mental health and behavioral needs of Hope Services Counseling Center clients.

Workshops included seminars on motivational interviewing, alcohol and drug abuse, psychopharmacology, emotional regulation, interaction with criminal justice, and the role of parent training.

“After the conference, I have more tools on being a better ally to this population,” said Alisha Cassarino-Skeeters, a Hope Services clinician who volunteered at the conference, as did eight others on our staff. “I was very inspired by the entire experience.” Cassarino-Skeeters said the highlight for her was the keynote speaker; “he helped me realize I’m in the right field and how much good work we are doing.”

Next year’s conference will be held in Niagara Falls, Canada, from November 2-4, 2016.