



International Academy of Suicide Research

IASR Newsletter

AUTUMN 2021



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Message From the President



Dear IASR members and participants of the 2021 summit

This week we are opening the 5th IASR and AFSP virtual **Summit on Suicide Research** with more than 520 participants, the largest summit ever. As an International Academy, we planned to hold this congress for the first time outside the US, in Barcelona and conduct a pre-congress workshop in Rome, but unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic put a spoke in our wheels. Due to the pandemic this will be a virtual conference but hopefully in 2023 we will meet in Barcelona for a face-to-face meeting.

When I was elected two years ago, I promised to promote **educational activities** between summits. Despite the limitations on traveling, we succeeded to promote many educational activities prior to the summit for both senior and junior scientists:

A year and a half ago we conducted a **Metanalysis and Systematic Review workshop with Prof. Stefan Leucht MD** from Germany. More than 60 participants learned how to conduct a metanalysis. They then split into 4 groups, chose subjects to study and continued working on their studies for the next year and a half. These 4 groups will present their findings in a IASR workshop during the summit.

In collaboration with AFSP we conducted **2 virtual webinars for early career researchers** on suicide-research methods. More than 50 early career researchers participated in each webinar.

We finalized and published a **SPOC, short private online course**, an introduction to suicidology, open to all of you on our website. In 6-8 minute zoom talks, IASR experts teach the basics of suicidology. More lectures will be added soon.



President: Prof. Gil Zalsman
President-Elect and Editor-in-Chief,
Archive in Suicide Research: Prof. Barbara Stanley
Past-President: Prof. Lars Mehlum

Secretary: Prof. Katalin Szanto
Treasurer: Prof. Vladimir Carli
Newsletter Editor: Prof. Yossi Levi-Belz
Member-at-large: Dr. Diana E. Clarke

Message From the President



At the summit, 50 early career researchers will participate in the **early career researcher forum** organised by **Prof. Elizabeth Sublette and Dr. Olivia Kirtley** with a lecture by **Prof. Diego the Leo**. They will also be matched with senior researchers through **mentorship programs**.

Our journal the **Archives for Suicide Research** is improving with an impact factor of over 3 under the leadership of the editors in chief **Prof. Barbara Stanley and Prof. Rory O'Connor**.

During this conference we intend to give away two **IASR best poster awards**, worth \$1000 USD each. The **James Kirk Bernard Foundation** will award a scholarship in Biological Psychiatry to a young researcher.

If you are not a member yet, I urge you to apply for membership in IASR. You can do that through the banner in the reception hall of the conference.

I would like to thank the IASR board members who are leading all these activities: **Dr. Diana E. Clarke**, member-at-large, **Prof. Vladimir Carli**, Treasurer, **Prof. Lars Mehlum**, past President, **Prof. Katalin Szanto**, Secretary and **Prof. Barbara Stanley**, our Journal Editor and President-elect.

Finally, I would like to thank the organising committee of the summit: **Prof. Jill Harkavy Friedman** and **CEO Bob Gabia** from AFSP, our two excellent summit chairs: **Prof. Ping Qin** and **Prof. John Mann** who did a wonderful job and the excellent Parthenon team led by Kelly Phy.

I hope we all enjoy the summit and the educational activities in between summits.

Prof. Gil Zalsman MD MHA

President, International Academy of Suicide Research

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2021 Virtual Conference
IASR/AFSP International Summit on Suicide Research
 October 24-27, 2021



Suicide Research and Prevention Without Borders

The Upcoming IASR/AFSP Suicide Research Summit!

I have the honor of being Program Co-chair of the 2021 IASR/AFSP Suicide Research Summit together with Ping Qin from the University of Oslo. Our IASR President, Gil Zalsman, Chair of Psychiatry at Tel Aviv University, has asked me to help give you an appreciation of the wonderful program of science and fun we have created for this virtual conference. We wanted this meeting to be in-person, but COVID makes that impossible. We made the virtual format a virtue by offering you the capability to see sessions and talks in real time or stream them later when it suits you.

This eliminates the problem of wanting to hear two terrific talks or sessions that are on the schedule at the same time. Just listen to one now and the other one later. You can do the same thing when work or personal life gets in the way of zooming into the meeting. Another wonderful asset is the poster session. Now you can view all the posters, get a video tour of the poster AND even chat live to the poster presenter. All this without having to squeeze past a lot of people in narrow aisles.

We have a great event for early career researchers, and I urge you to read about that event and participate. We have a creative social program that allows you to network with other attendees in a safe, fun environment, and have included some fun resources with wellness tips and tricks to boost your immune system and energize you during a virtual event.

After all of that, we have nothing less than the best scientific program of any conference related to suicide on the planet. This is the core of our meeting. On the program, you will see the best research on the most important and diverse research topics. We sought to engage younger and older investigators in giving talks, to be inclusive in terms of gender and sex and race and ethnicity. The IASR is international and so are our speakers. By joining the IASR you can make our membership more diverse. Check out our website.

A novel feature is a talk followed by a question-and-answer session involving the Director of NIMH, Josh Gordon, and Maria Oquendo as the questioner, on the topic of how does research funding of suicide research match up with the current priority areas of need for suicide research? The NIMH may provide the most funding for suicide research in the World and how it is distributed between research areas greatly influences what is discovered. See this session and learn about the differences in view of the suicide research funding agency and the researcher.

These high points are imbedded in a very rich program. We have 10 invited and 18 submitted symposia covering big data, neurobiology and genetics, media and social media, bereavement, suicide in under-served populations, population and system-based approaches to suicide prevention, how suicide is related to illness and pain, and suicide across the life cycle. Then we have many oral sessions and two large poster sessions.

Do not miss this amazing event. Register and engage. See you online!

Yours, John Mann



International Academy of Suicide Research

2021 Virtual Conference

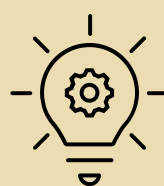
IASR/AFSP International Summit on Suicide Research

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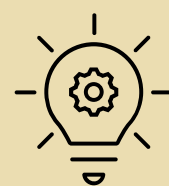


Suicide Research and Prevention Without Borders

Spotlight on two workshops in the IASR-AFSP meeting



IASR Metanalysis and Systematic Review Workshop Project



This symposium will summarize the IASR metanalysis and systematic review project started by a zoom workshop led by Prof. Lucht from Germany and Prof. Zalsman, Prof. Stanley, Prof. Carli, and Dr. Clark from IASR.

More than 60 participants learned how to conduct a metanalysis. Later, divided into four groups, participants continued working for the past year and a half on four systematic reviews and metanalyses to be published soon.

In this symposium, we will present the four groups' preliminary results. Discussion on future plans will follow.

Monday October 25

Presenters:

Gil Zalsman, B.Sc., M.D., M.H., *Chair*

Geha Mental Health Center, Sackler School of Medicine, Tel Aviv University

Sudan Prasad Neupane, Ph.D. National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, Institute of Clinical Medicine, University of Oslo

Immune and Inflammatory Factors in Suicidal Behaviors: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Raffaella Calati, Ph.D. INSERM U1061, University of Montpellier UM1, Montpellier, France

Ethnic Discrimination and Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors: An International-Intercontinental Collaborative Project for a Systematic Review

Vladimir Carli, M.D., Ph.D. NASP, Karolinska Institute

Technology Enhanced Suicide Preventive Interventions: What Is the Evidence?

Diana Clarke, M.Sc., Ph.D. American Psychiatric Association

The Association Between Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Suicide Related Outcomes in Black Women Living in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.



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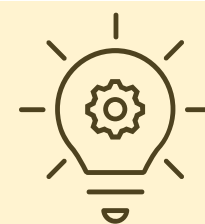


Suicide Research and Prevention Without Borders

Spotlight on two workshops in the IASR-AFSP meeting



Funding Supporting Suicide Prevention Research: A Conversation With Funding Organizations



Thinking of applying for research funding and not sure about options?

This session provides an opportunity to hear from and ask questions about research support opportunities.

Some organizations, like the National Institute of Mental Health, fund research globally. Organizations like the VA fund research specifically related to veterans while PCORI supports implementation grants for clinical and community interventions. AFSP is the largest private funder of suicide research. SAMHSA supports community service related to suicide prevention.

The entire panel can provide tips on how to obtain funding for your research.

Audience questions are welcome.

Monday October 25



Moderator:

Jill Harkavy-Friedman, Ph.D.
Columbia University

Speakers:

Stephen O'Connor, Ph.D.
National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Elizabeth Houtsmuller, Ph.D.,
Patient-Centered Outcome Research Institute (PCORI)

Carl Niedzielski, MA,
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Richard McKeon, Ph.D.
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Joseph Constans, Ph.D.
Veterans Administration (VA)



International Academy of Suicide Research

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International Academy
of Suicide Research



American
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for Suicide
Prevention

Suicide Research and Prevention Without Borders



2021 Summit Early Career Researcher Forum



The International Academy of Suicide Research (IASR) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) are committed to the development of Early Career Researchers (ECRs), such as graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, residents, and junior faculty, within the field of suicidology. At a time when we may feel isolated from our colleagues due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, building supportive networks is more important now than ever.

To foster a supportive suicide prevention research community, we are planning an exciting and valuable program for ECRs at the upcoming 2021 Virtual International Summit on Suicide Research, on October 24 - 27. The ECR forum was one of the most talked-about aspects of the 2019 program, and even though we have to go virtual this year, we are excited to offer another stimulating, interactive program!

Diego de Leo, MD, PhD

Diego de Leo (Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at Griffith University, Brisbane; Director Emeritus of the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Suicide Prevention) will be giving the ECR keynote talk and passing on his words of wisdom for those starting out in the field of suicidology.



As well as our special guest speaker, we have also organized a “Mentoring Across Borders” activity, based around the Summit theme of “suicide prevention without borders”. During this event, ECRs will have the opportunity to meet a variety of senior researchers and fellow ECRs with overlapping interests and interact together in a brief group activity to collaboratively address a key challenge in the field. As always, each ECR will be matched in advance with a specific mentor and will then be able to meet with them later in the conference.

We will also be hosting a Gather Town social meetup during the Summit and will share details of this closer to the time.

Whether you are an Early Career Researcher or a more senior researcher, you are welcome to sign up to participate.

Senior researchers, we encourage you to volunteer to serve as a Mentor during the Summit and to tell your early career colleagues about the program.

Note: You must be registered for this event to attend.

We look forward to (virtually) seeing you soon!

Olivia Kirtley, PhD

M. Elizabeth Sublette, MD, PhD



International Academy of Suicide Research



“The Expert Corner”



Conversations with experts and pioneers in suicide research

Interviewing: Prof. Yossi Levi-Belz



Maura Boldrini, MD, PhD is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia Medical College, Director of the Human Brain Biology Institute (Brain QUANT), and the Human Neurobiology laboratory in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University Irving Medical Center and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Her research focuses on understanding underlying mechanisms of behavioral, cognitive and emotional changes associated with brain diseases.

In her practice, Dr. Boldrini specializes in affective disorders and suicidal behavior. She has experience treating a number of emotional and behavioral problems, including depression, anxiety, personality disorders, addictions, and stress reactions.

In her laboratory, Dr. Boldrini is studying brain circuits involved in depression, suicide, aging and other neurodegenerative conditions. She is studying brain circuits at the cellular and molecular level, and she is interested in understanding how the mind and the brain interact generating symptoms that make people suffer.



How COVID-19 Affects the Brain?



Maura Boldrini, MD, PhD

Q. How can COVID produce mental and cognitive symptoms?

Via inflammation or penetration into the brain or via vascular damage

Q. Does Covid infiltrate the brain?

There is not much evidence that it does, except in some specific areas where there are circumventricular organs (CVOs) where there is no blood brain barrier (BBB). These brain regions next to CVOs include the brain stem and other regions near the ventricles, including the hippocampus. If affected, COVID damage to these regions could result in cardiorespiratory shut down and “brain fog” or loss of ability to focus, depression, and fatigue. Damage to ventral areas of the brain can induce insomnia and loss of behavioral control, poor decision making and impulsivity (several post-COVID suicides have been reported).

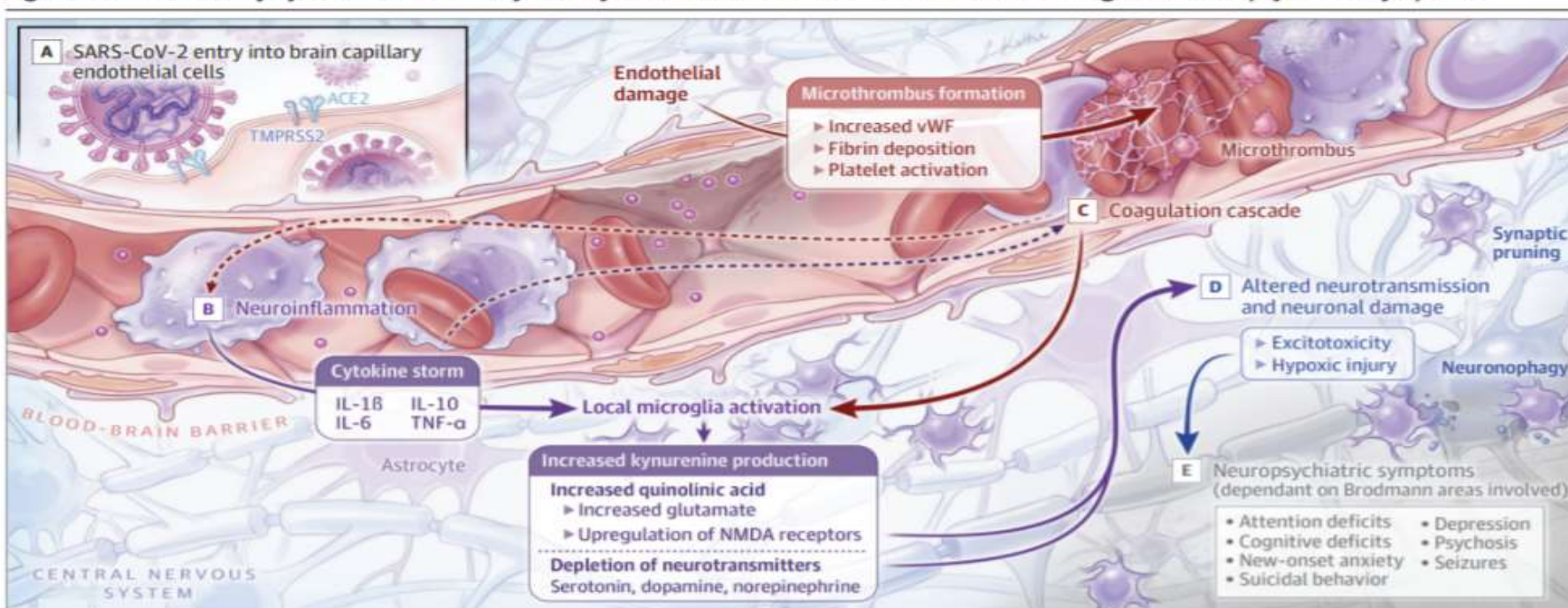
Q. What are the effects of inflammation?

Inflammation induces a disruption of the synthesis of one of the major neurotransmitters involved in emotional and behavioral functions: serotonin. From tryptophan, instead of making serotonin, kynurenine gets produced and that induces loss of serotonergic transmission. Moreover, activation of microglia induces excitatory damage via quinolinic acid. This is another way that depressive and cognitive symptoms can occur.

Q. What happens following vascular damage?

Micro strokes occurring following endothelial damage by inflammation, induce brain neuron loss due to hypoxia, with a mechanism similar to that of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Therefore, people present with sudden cognitive and behavioral changes, including suicide.

Figure. Brain Vascular Injury, Neurotransmitter System Dysfunction, Thrombotic Events, Neuronal Damage, and Neuropsychiatric Symptoms



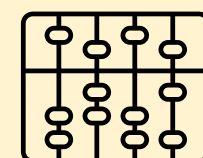
A, SARS-CoV-2 invades endothelial cells via transmembrane angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptor, enabled by transmembrane protease, serine 2 (TMPRSS2). B, Cytokine elevation and microglia activation result in increased kynurenine, quinolinic acid, and glutamate, and neurotransmitter depletion. C, Coagulation cascade and elevation of von Willebrand factor (vWF) lead to thrombotic events. D, Altered neurotransmission, excitotoxicity by increased glutamate, and hypoxic injury contribute to neuronal dysfunction and loss. E, Neuropsychiatric symptoms differ depending on the Brodmann area involved. IL indicates interleukin; NMDA, N-methyl-D-aspartate; TNF, tumor necrosis factor.

See article here:

https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/articlepdf/yrtaihcympamaj/2778090_1622231770.764_210001_pn_2021_inirdlob_fdp.4

IASR Meta-analysis and Systematic Review Summer Workshop

Liat Itzhaky, PhD



Liat Itzhaky (PhD) is a clinical psychologist, who specializes in children and adolescents. She is currently an Adjunct Research Scientist at Geha Mental Health Center in Israel. Her research focuses on understanding suicide risk in preadolescent children and on developing suicide prevention interventions for this age group.

In mid-September 2020, about 60 researchers from across the world participated in the *IASR Meta-analysis and Systematic Review Summer Workshop for Mid to Senior Career Suicidologists* and learned all the necessary steps to conduct a meta-analysis and systematic review.

The workshop was led by Prof. Stefan Leucht from the Technische Universität München, Germany, a world expert in meta-analysis with the IASR board members. The participating researchers were asked to choose their field of interest ahead of time (i.e., biology-pharmacology, psychotherapy, epidemiology or health services, and suicide preventive interventions). Then, in a breakout session at the workshop, they joined others to initiate a meta-analysis or systematic review of a suicide related research question in their fields of interest. The breakout sessions were led by IASR Board members, each in their field of expertise. Remarkably, in the year since the workshop, these breakout sessions have evolved into four separate large projects. These projects are integrating existing findings and answering urgent questions in our field through systematic reviews and meta-analyses, putting into practice the theory learned in the workshop.

The biology-pharmacology group, led by Professors Zalsman and Mann, initiated a systematic review and meta-analysis to evaluate the relationship between immune and inflammatory biomarkers and suicidal behavior. The second group, led by Prof. Clarke, is working on two systematic reviews. One is an investigation of the relationship between ethnic discrimination and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The second is a systematic review on the association between intimate partner violence and suicide related outcomes in Black women living in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The third group, led by Prof. Carli, is currently reviewing the literature regarding the effectiveness of technology enhanced suicide preventive interventions. All these groups comprise international scholars with various seniority levels working in an extraordinary, collaborative, and inspiring atmosphere, putting into practice the goal of an international research association. Personally, it has been a wonderful learning experience that has allowed me to integrate both the theory and practice of these research methods, all while being privileged to be a part of an international professional milieu. A glance into these projects will be available at the upcoming IASR/AFSP suicide research summit.

AFSP/IASR Virtual Research Training Series:



Research on Survivors of Suicide Loss



Research about surviving suicide loss is a priority for AFSP and our goal is to energize the research community to take up this important area of research and demonstrate the breadth of work and approaches.

On September 21 we conducted a one-session, stand-alone training in concepts and approaches related specifically to the issues and practices of research about survivors of suicide loss. This is an important, underexplored area of suicide prevention research, and it is a priority area for AFSP's research grants program. This Webinar session introduced researchers at all levels to the key concepts, questions, and methods.

Moderator: **Jill Harkavy-Friedman, Ph.D.**

Presenters in the webinar:

Erika Barber, MAT, CCLS, AFSP Loss & Healing Council

Julie Cerel, PhD, University of Kentucky

Yossi Levi-Belz, PhD, Ruppin Academic Center

Annette Erlangsen, PhD, Danish Research Institute for Suicide Prevention

Noam Schneck, PhD, Columbia University

Kathy Shear, MD, Columbia University

To watch the webinar, go to: <https://afsp.org/research-trainings-and-roundtables#iasr-afsp-webinar-on-research-on-survivors-of-suicide-loss>





Thank you for reading!
For more information about IASR please visit:
<https://suicide-research.org/>

