

Mission: Nebraska Psychiatric Society exists to advance the profession of psychiatry, serve the needs of our members and provide support for psychiatric services across Nebraska.

Vision: To become a trusted voice and resource for psychiatric services in Nebraska.

## *A Message from the President:*

Hello again fellow NPS members! Spring is in full swing, and I hope you are all finding time to pause and appreciate the beauty that this season brings. I know many of you have busy lives with family duties, work duties and household responsibilities so pausing seems impossible. However, I encourage you to try getting outside, away from your cell phones and other distractions, and go for a walk. Even 30 minutes of fresh air and sunshine is quite therapeutic for me, and hopefully it will be for you too.

This is the time of year when some major transitions take place. High school graduations are right around the corner, and this can be both exciting and stressful on a number of fronts. For some of your kids college couldn't come soon enough, some of them may be anxious about it, and some may have other plans. This comes with quite a mix of emotions so please lean on any of us for support if you need it. For some of you, you are excited to finally have all the kids out of the house so you can rediscover that freedom you once had, and many of you are going to grieve as your child spreads his or her wings and ventures into the world on their own. I'm sure the majority of you will have a mix of all of these emotions and more. I and the rest of the NPS board sincerely wish you peace and contentment during this storm.

Speaking of storms, I am writing this on April 27th, one day after a devastating tornado (actually several tornadoes) ripped through neighborhoods in western Omaha, Elkhorn and other neighboring cities. Some of you may have been in the path of this storm, which caused extensive destruction. I was listening to

meteorologist Bill Randby who stated that he has never seen a storm like this in all his time as a meteorologist in the metro area. Please know that the NPS board are praying for you all and we are here for you.

Finally, I must let you know that this will be my last article as your President, as Alëna Balasanova will be taking over in May after the annual APA conference. She is a huge advocate for our patients and our profession, and I'm excited to see where she takes NPS over the next couple years! I'm sure she will do great. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the whole NPS community and MOMS. I want to specifically thank Carol Wang, our executive director, for keeping us afloat. She handles all of the behind-the-scenes responsibilities and NPS wouldn't happen without her.

Finally, as always, I want to remind each of you that you are valued by NPS. Your mission to provide psychiatric care in Nebraska is more critical than ever. Please let us know if we can help you personally in any way.

Gratefully,

Steve Salzbrenner, MD  
NPS President



**Stephen Salzbrenner,  
MD**

## **The Nebraska Psychiatry Newsletter**

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Legislative Update

On April 18, 2024, the Legislature adjourned sine die, concluding the second session of the 108th Nebraska Legislature and leaving behind a trail of decisions that will shape the state's future. With a focus on budget allocations, healthcare, mental health services, and contentious social issues, the session proved to be eventful. Throughout this period, we closely monitored bills relating to mental health services.

One of the significant accomplishments of the session was the approval of a budget allocating \$755 million from Nebraska's main treasury and various cash funds and reserves, excluding biennial budget adjustments. Additionally, the state anticipates receiving approximately \$1.5 billion in federal funds, primarily designated for healthcare programs.

During the session, senators voted on more than 100 proposals, addressing a wide range of issues affecting Nebraskans. Among the prominent bills were those related to mental health services, reflecting the growing awareness of and concern for mental health issues in the state.

LB62 was successfully adopted which mandates Medicaid coverage and reimbursement for translation and interpretation services provided by healthcare practitioners. This aims to streamline the process and reduce barriers to healthcare access for individuals with limited English proficiency.

LB1355, introduced by State Sen. Tony Vargas of Omaha, garnered attention for its allocation of \$3 million to six statewide regional behavioral health authorities for opioid treatment and response efforts. This bill also directed \$9 million towards a fund for local and state public-private partnerships aimed at opioid use prevention and enhancing treatment infrastructure, totaling \$13.5 million in expenditure. The bill was passed and signed into law by the Governor.

Another significant mental health-related bill was LB1320, sponsored by State Sen. Beau Ballard of Lincoln. This bill, incorporated into LB1355, mandated that emergency medical service providers make their best efforts to report incidents of suspected or actual overdose within 72 hours. The reported information would be shared with programs aimed at addressing drug trafficking and overdose mapping.

LB307, the Safe Syringe Bill, would have empowered local jurisdictions (defined as a city council or county board) to authorize the creation of a syringe service program within the boundaries of their jurisdiction should they choose to do so. The requirements of what such a program would entail were also outlined in the bill and included a needs assessment and resources to connect participants to both mental and physical healthcare. The bill specified that should a local jurisdiction choose to authorize such a program, it could not be located within 500 feet of a public school, playground, community center, or other public environment where children are often encountered. The bill had wide bipartisan support in the officially non-partisan legislature and passed with votes of 37 in favor on general file, 31 in favor on select file, and 30 in favor on final reading. Unfortunately, largely due to misinformation and stigmatizing beliefs, the governor vetoed the bill. The legislature attempted to override the veto but failed to achieve the required 30 votes (27 voted in favor) because 6 senators flipped their positions. Dr. Balasanova worked with the Nebraska Medical Association to draft the amendment introduced by Speaker Arch, who championed the bill alongside the bill's introducer Senator Hunt. Speaker Arch has expressed interest in seeing this bill through, opening the door to the possibility that another version could be introduced in the next biennium.

Social issues were also at the forefront of legislative discussions during the session. LB25 aimed to hold state agencies and political subdivisions accountable if their employees committed sexual abuse against a child. Despite passing in the Legislature, Governor Jim Pillen vetoed the measure due to concerns about its financial impact on taxpayers.

Another bill addressing sexual assault, LB870, focused on ensuring transparency and support for survivors of sexual assault. The bill mandated that law enforcement notify survivors at least six weeks before disposing of their sexual assault kits, allowing survivors to request extended preservation and receive updates on their case's status.

There were multiple contentious bills such as LB575 (known as the Sports and Spaces Act) which aimed to define K-12 school bathrooms and sports teams based on students' biological sex at birth. This bill

Harmit Singh, MD



Alëna Balasanova, MD

failed and was postponed indefinitely.

Another such bill, LB810, the Medical Ethics and Diversity Act, failed to pass. This bill sought to protect medical practitioners, healthcare institutions, and payers from being compelled to engage in or cover medical procedures or medications that conflicted with their conscience.

LB999 proposed changes to the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act and the Uniform Controlled Substances Act. The bill aimed to regulate the sale, possession, and consumption of hemp-derived cannabinoid products, addressing concerns about their potential health risks and lack of regulation. The bill failed and was postponed indefinitely.

As the legislative session adjourned, Nebraska lawmakers left their mark on various aspects of the state's governance, addressing pressing issues while navigating complex social, healthcare, and agricultural challenges.

Feel free to connect with your local representative via email, phone call, or letter to voice your opinion on legislation. You can find your senator at this link: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov>. Your voice as a constituent is important. If you're interested in testifying during a committee hearing next year, the APA offers resources to assist you. We also have experienced NPS members who can provide guidance through the process. Don't hesitate to contact any Executive Committee member for assistance with legislative matters.

Submitted by Harmit Singh, MD with contributions from Alëna Balasanova, MD

Assembly Report

In May 2024 your Area 4 APA Assembly Representatives joined throngs of psychiatrists descending upon New York, Manhattan, and Times Square for the 100th (!) meeting of the APA General Assembly. Despite some overcast and misty skies, the Big Apple proved a welcoming host. Your taxi driver may have grumbled, "It's still winter here" en route to the congestion zone from LaGuardia, but that is untrue. Verdant shrubbery and trees lined the route, and Central Park was in bloom. Area 4 representatives living on the Great Plains know what winter is, and this wasn't it.

Once settled in our respective hotels conveniently located within walking distance of the host facility—the Marriott on Times Square—we sauntered past classic New York cuisine. A hot pastrami from the deli? Thank you! A bagel and cream cheese from that cute hole-in-the-wall bakery? Yes, please. Pizza by the slice served by a chef just assertive and pleasant enough to keep a Midwesterner engaged but not in a state of total terror? Of course.

We opened our Area 4 meeting by thanking Dr. Ken Bush for leading us so well for these past years, and we welcomed his replacement, Dr. Clarence

Chou. Dr. Chou is an amazing leader with encyclopedic knowledge, and we are so fortunate to have such a fine legacy of leaders. Area 4 continues to shine with events and activities that distinguish us, such as resident forums, featured lectures, and the fact that our finances are in great shape. And if the Assembly had an award for Most Congenial Area, we would win every year.

The general assembly considered a bumper crop of action papers this year with a wide range of subjects. Interested members are encouraged to go to the APA website to review action papers: <https://www.psychiatry.org/about-apa/meet-our-organization/assembly/action-paper-central>. Debate is ongoing on the governance and structure of the Assembly, the need for in-person versus remote meetings, and how this relates to our current membership and climate impact. We also were entertained by a celebration of the 100 years of the assembly with historical highlights and taped interviews with legacy members. While the theme of the Assembly was a celebration of 100 years, we would add a secondary theme that kept appearing throughout the three days: The future of the American Psychiatric Association, our profession, and the

Martin Wetzel, MD



Melissa O'Dell, MD

delivery of mental health care. Sure, strolling through Central Park in spring is a treat—but regardless of where any APA psychiatrist treads, the APA will continue to strive to support that psychiatrist as a clinician, support their patients, and support the advancement of mental health care delivery to all.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Martin Wetzel, MD & Melissa O'Dell, MD  
Area 4 Representatives

In Memoriam - Natalie J. Baker-Heser, MD

Dr. Baker, age 57, passed away February 15, 2024. She was a graduate of UNMC and completed general psychiatry residency at the CU/UNMC combined program in 2000. She was a member of APA and served on the NPS Executive Committee. Natalie was a dedicated and conscientious physician who served her patients - many who were housed in state institutions - with utmost professionalism and compassion. She did the psychiatric day-to-day work that is hard, heroic, and unheralded, but so central to our profession. Those of us fortunate to know Dr. Baker will greatly miss her energy and laughter.



## Creighton Psychiatry Resident Heading to Fellowship



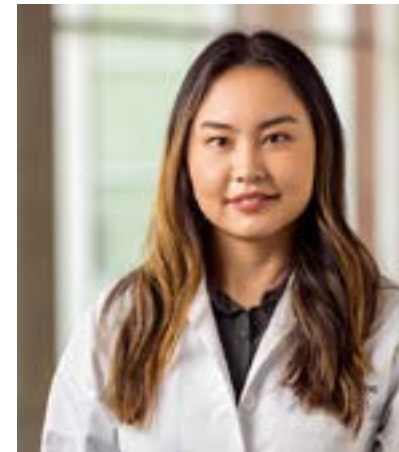
Moving from rural, central Minnesota to Omaha in 2017, Kellen Andersen is a first-generation physician. He completed medical school at Creighton University and was thrilled to match at Creighton for psychiatry residency but is even more excited to stay and fast-track into the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship at Creighton. During residency, Kellen continued exploring the human condition and realized how early development throughout childhood and adolescence can affect mental health later in life. With a desire to provide care for the whole person, regardless of age or circumstance, Kellen is pursuing Child and Adolescent fellowship training to better explore the effects of attachment, developmental psychopathology, and how early intervention can help change the course of mental illness in children and their families. After completing fellowship, Kellen hopes to explore, but feels a strong call to stay in Omaha to give back to the community and program that gave him so much. A lover of the intersection between medical humanities and academic psychiatry, Kellen has an academic interest in innovating ways to instruct medical students and residents using applied improvisational theatre. Kellen would like to thank his peers, staff, and faculty for their contributions to his learning and academic pursuits and for being role models of *cura personalis* every day. He is excited to continue to use these teachings, stories, and lessons learned to further benefit future patients and their families in fellowship.

## Annual Membership Meeting

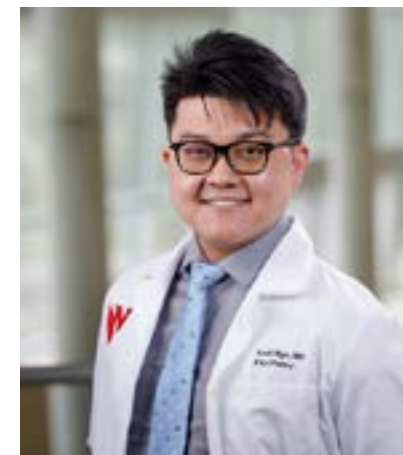


NPS gathers at Vis Major for the annual membership meeting (pictured left to right: psychiatrists Juvet Che and Alëna Balasanova with Creighton resident Josh Robak & UNMC resident Jacob Givens, psychiatrist Alëna Balasanova, and UNMC resident Matt Kelly).

## UNMC Psychiatry Residents Heading to Fellowship



Tianqi (Nina) Luo graduated from Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2021 and is currently a third-year psychiatry resident at UNMC. She will be heading to Wayne State in Detroit for child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship in July 2024. Her interest in child and adolescent psychiatry started with a medical school rotation on an inpatient child psychiatry unit, and she enjoyed her child psychiatry clinic this past year. Nina is grateful for the supportive learning environment at UNMC Psychiatry Residency Program where she found both great mentorship and friendship. One of her proudest achievements during residency is starting a podcast with co-resident Max Lydiatt, *History of Madness*, which is about the history of psychiatry. Her plan is to practice psychiatry in the Michigan area.



Andi Ngo is set to begin a Sleep Medicine Fellowship at OHSU in Portland, OR. His journey into the world of sleep medicine started not in the clinic, but from personal experience, dealing with Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Idiopathic Hypersomnia. This firsthand battle and its eventual successful management sparked his interest in the field, highlighting the profound impact that sleep disorders can have on well-being.

During his residency training in psychiatry, he observed how untreated sleep conditions could not only magnify the severity of physiologic and psychiatric symptoms, but also complicate treatment outcomes. Recognizing sleep health as a foundational element of overall well-being, he became an advocate for integrating sleep assessments into routine psychiatric care. As he witnessed time and again the transformative impact that addressing sleep issues could have on mental health conditions, from depression and anxiety to PTSD and ADHD, he became further enthralled in Sleep Medicine.

Reflecting on his residency at UNMC, Andi recalls his time on the Consult Liaison Service presented him with the unique chance to encounter and manage Kleine-Levin Syndrome, proving to him the wonders of sleep pathologies. Furthermore, he is profoundly grateful for the opportunity provided by his program's leadership to deepen his knowledge in the Outpatient Sleep Medicine Clinic, extending his skills from mere diagnosis to the comprehensive management of sleep disorders.

Looking ahead, Andi is considering potentially completing one of Oregon's State Approved Psilocybin Training Programs while he resides in the Pacific Northwest. Though he contemplates a return to Nebraska to practice Sleep Medicine, either in Lincoln or at the Omaha VA, he remains adaptable to where his professional path might lead.

Loneliness is a complex and universal human emotion, often described as a feeling of emptiness or isolation and results from a perceived discrepancy between one's desired and actual social relationships. It is a feeling of not being heard, seen, or understood and a lack of sense of belonging and understanding from others. From an evolutionary perspective, loneliness may have served as a signal to seek out social connections, which were essential for survival in ancient times.

However, in modern society, where social connections can be more tenuous, feelings of loneliness can become more pervasive. The rise of technology, urbanization, and changes in family and work structures have all led to a decline in collective experiences amongst people. Social media has led to a rise in superficial interactions with others and a decrease in meaningful social connections. We have gone from seeking friends we “like” to seeking “likes” on social media. Streaming movies at home by oneself has replaced going to the movie theater with friends. Food delivery services have made us more inclined to eat alone at home instead of going out with friends. Online gaming has replaced gathering in person to play sports or board games. Online shopping has taken away the opportunity of a chance encounter with an old friend in the mall and self-checkout counters have replaced small talk with the cashier.

In a 2020 Harvard survey, 61% of young adults in the United States reported feeling “serious loneliness” and a 2018 survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 21% of adults in the U.S. often or always feel lonely or socially isolated. Elderly and teenage populations comprise the largest demographic of people with loneliness. Marginalized and impoverished communities also report higher rates of loneliness. COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns further exacerbated the problem of loneliness around the world.

While it is normal to experience loneliness at times, chronic loneliness can have profound effects on a person's mental and physical health. Research has consistently shown that loneliness is associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders. Loneliness can also contribute to feelings of low self-esteem and inadequacy, further exacerbating the cycle of loneliness. Loneliness has been linked to an increased risk of substance use disorder. In children, it can limit learning of social skills that further impairs their ability to form meaningful relationships with others.

From a physiological perspective, loneliness has been linked to increased inflammation, elevated stress hormones, and a weakened immune system, all of which can have negative effects on overall health. A 2016 meta-analysis indicates that loneliness and social isolation are associated with a 29% increased risk of coronary heart disease and 32% increased risk of stroke. Loneliness is associated with higher healthcare utilization, including visits to primary care providers and emergency departments. Additionally, social isolation is associated with a 50% increased risk of early death according to a 2017 BYU meta-analysis.

These statistics underscore the importance of addressing loneliness as a public health issue. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has highlighted loneliness as a growing public health concern, emphasizing its impact on individuals and communities. Countries such as Japan and the UK have formed a ministry of loneliness to combat this growing epidemic in the modern world.

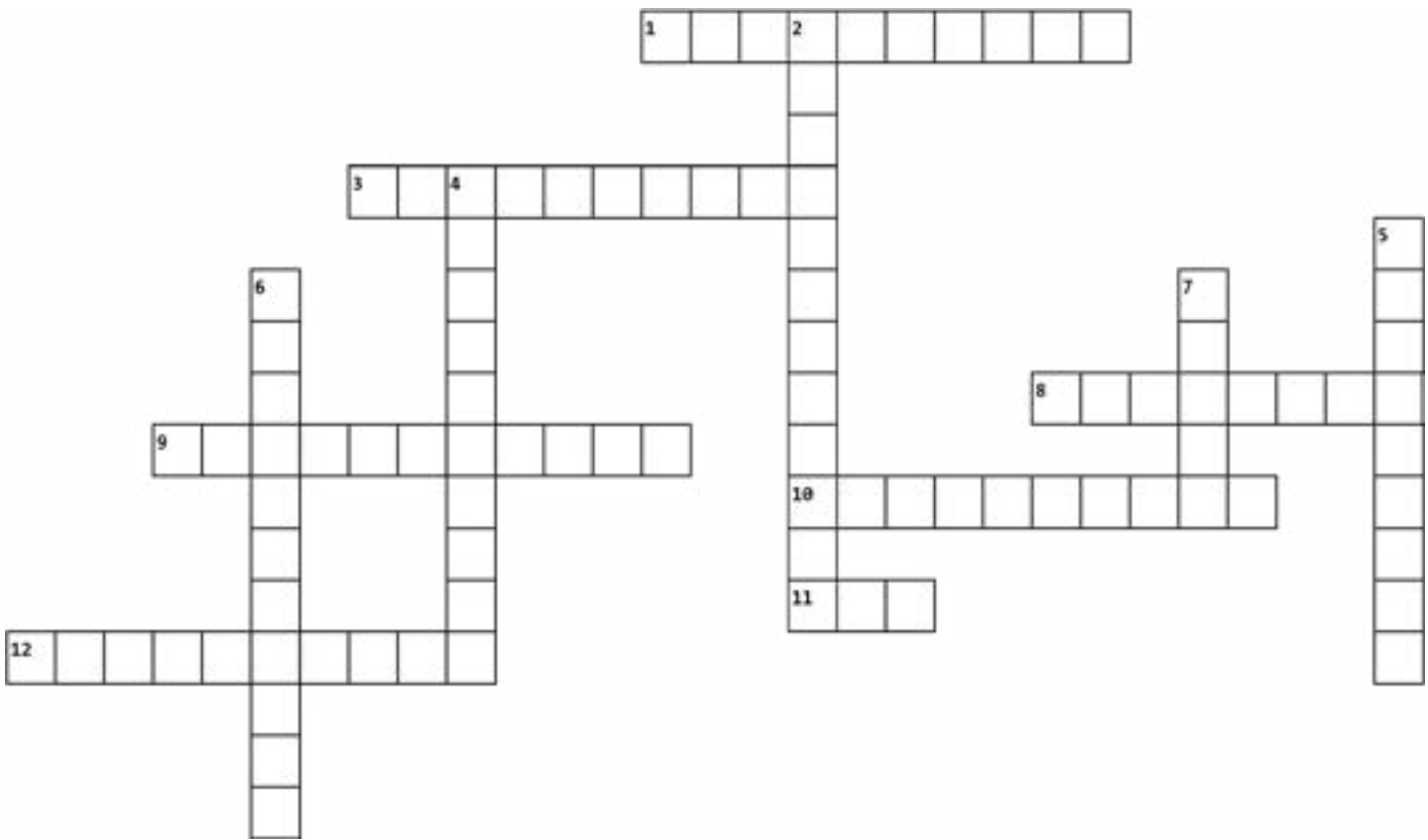
Here are some key solutions:

- Seek out opportunities to meet new people and build relationships, such as joining clubs, volunteering, or attending social events.
- Maintain existing relationships by staying in touch with friends and family, even if only through phone calls or video chats.

- Use social media and technology to connect with others, but be mindful of maintaining meaningful, face-to-face interactions.
- Get involved in community activities and organizations that align with your interests and values.
- Participate in local events, such as community festivals, workshops, or group fitness classes.
- Volunteer for causes you care about, as helping others can provide a sense of purpose and connection.
- Practice self-care and stress management techniques to improve your overall well-being.
- Foster a sense of belonging and inclusion in your community or workplace by welcoming others and creating a supportive atmosphere.
- Encourage open and honest conversations about loneliness and mental health to reduce stigma and increase awareness.
- Advocate for policies and programs that address social isolation and promote social connectedness at the societal level.
- Join a sports team, fitness class, or walking group which can provide opportunities for social interaction while benefiting your physical and mental health.
- Seek help from mental health professionals if you're feeling lonely or struggling with your mental health.
- Join support groups for individuals experiencing loneliness or related mental health issues.

Combating loneliness requires a proactive and holistic approach that addresses individual, interpersonal, and societal factors. By taking steps to build social connections, foster community engagement, and prioritize mental health, we can work towards creating a more connected and supportive society.

NPS Crossword



- Across
- 1. Derived from "playing on the stage"; excessive emotionality and attention seeking
  - 3. This neuropeptide deficiency is part of narcolepsy diagnostic criteria
  - 8. A loss of the capacity to experience joy and pleasure
  - 9. Difficulty in the ability to verbalize emotions
  - 10. This medication can reduce binge drinking and alcohol cravings
  - 11. OCD therapy that confronts stimuli and prevents a maladaptive response
  - 12. Disorder of falsification of symptoms without obvious external incentive
- Down
- 2. Patient looks forward to seeing clinician who reminds them of Grandma
  - 4. This mineral decreases in refeeding syndrome
  - 5. Alternation between over-idealization and devaluation
  - 6. These symptoms of ADHD are more likely to improve as children age
  - 7. Surname for main contributor to object relations theory



**ANNOUNCEMENT:**  
We want everyone to be informed of exciting updates from NPS! Please ensure senders from “omahamedical.com” are being sent to your inbox, rather than spam. The communications promise to be useful, not overwhelming.



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