

## Background of Speakers Presenting at DBSA-Boston Winter 2015-2016



**December 9:** “Depression in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders,” Jean A. Frazier, MD  
Dr. Frazier directs a research program that addresses a variety of scientific problems relevant to advancing the understanding and treatment of individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism.

She received her MD from Dartmouth College, completed a residency in Adult Psychiatry at New England Medical Center, a fellowship in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Brown University, and a research fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in Bethesda, MD. She is professor of psychiatry and pediatrics and is the Executive Director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, MA.

Dr. Frazier will discuss what we know about prevalence of comorbid major depression in individuals with high functioning autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The clinical presentation of depression in those with ASD will be described, including both similarities and differences from depression seen in the general population. Diagnostic challenges will be outlined. Finally, the talk will end with an overview of evidence-based treatment options, including psychopharmacologic and non-pharmacologic, for individuals with ASD who are suffering from Major Depression.

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**January 13:** “Hormones and Mental Health in Women,” Karen K. Miller, MD, Laura E. Dichtel, MD, and Maren Nyer, PhD

**Karen K. Miller, MD**, is co-Clinical Director of the Neuroendocrine Clinical Center, faculty member in the Neuroendocrine Unit at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and a Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. **Laura E. Dichtel, MD**, is a clinician in the Neuroendocrine Clinical Center, faculty member in the Neuroendocrine Unit at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and Instructor at Harvard Medical School. **Maren Nyer, PhD**, is a clinical psychologist at the

Depression Clinical and Research Program at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Instructor at Harvard Medical School.

Drs. Miller, Dichtel and Nyer are clinical researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) who study the novel treatments for depression. They are currently working together on a study of the use of low-dose testosterone augmentation for the treatment of major depressive disorder in women at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is common in women, and women in particular often do not experience adequate improvement in symptoms with antidepressant treatment. Depressive symptoms, as well as low energy and reduced libido, often persist in this treatment-resistant group, leading to continued disability and poor quality of life. There are a handful of currently approved therapies that can be used in addition to antidepressant medications; however, many of these augmentation therapies have significant negative side effects.

The development of new effective and well-tolerated augmentation therapies would have significant public health implications for women. Our group is currently studying low-dose testosterone treatment as an augmentation therapy for improving mood in women with treatment-resistant MDD. This talk will review aspects of depression specifically related to women, including the interaction between hormones and depression and current research opportunities in this area.



**January 27:** “30th Anniversary DBSA National Conference,” Lillian Cravotta-Crouch (left) and Michele O’Shea (right)

Lillian, current Vice President and Michele, immediate past President, of the DBSA-Boston Board of Directors recently attended the DBSA National 30th Anniversary Conference. They will share highlights from the conference.

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**February:** “*Dangerously High*, Act II,” Kitty McKay

Kitty McKay began her successful period of recovery in 1995. Just a few short months later she joined what is now known as DBSA-Boston. Since then she has been a facilitator, a board member, chairman of the membership committee, and an active speaker on Creativity Forum Nights. She constantly sings praises for the support group that helped “save her life” Kitty also has been active in NAMI-MA (the National Alliance on Mental Illness) as an IOOV presenter since 2005. In 2010 Kitty began performing “*Dangerously High*”. She is currently working on producing a video of the show. Kitty has her master’s degree in Expressive Therapy from Lesley University.

“*Dangerously High*” is a one-woman-show with a message of hope for people with mental illness and their friends and families. The show highlights a personal experience with mania and its repercussions. It helps break the stigma of living with a mental illness. “*Dangerously High*” has information for those people who want further education about mental illness. With confidence, honesty, and humor it is also a dramatic presentation for those who simply love theatre. [Read more about “\*Dangerously High\*.”](#)

Kitty performed Part I of “*Dangerously High*” on October 14, 2015, at DBSA-Boston. She will perform Part II on February 1, 2016, when she will reveal what happened after she called 911 to end her manic ideation about being a secret agent.

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**February 24:** “Marsha, Mary, My Momma and Me: How DBT and the poetry of Mary Oliver helped me save my life and repair relationships,” Eliza Williamson

Eliza T. Williamson, MEd, MFA (left, with dog Oliver) lives in Metrowest Boston with her wife Heather and their golden retriever, Oliver. After over a decade of crisis and chaos, Eliza was hopeless and her mom was exhausted. In the midst of much pain and anger, Eliza and her Mom remained tethered through sharing Mary Oliver’s poetry – reading new poems over the phone on a nightly basis.

After a near fatal suicide attempt, Eliza was introduced to Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), a program developed by Marsha Linehan. DBT enabled Eliza to take charge of her life, learn how to manage emotions and repair her relationship with her Mom. Through using DBT skills, Eliza has not only saved her life, but has created one more splendid than she imagined possible.

Eliza will share her story in this talk and discuss the ways that she utilized DBT to go from a life of chaos, self injury, and hopelessness to one beyond what she dreamed possible. This presentation will include Q&A with the audience, during which time Eliza will be joined by her mother.