FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 7, 2013
Reflections on Clinical Practice and Clinical Research in Traumatic Stress Conference is a Success
by Thérèse O. Clemens, Executive Director
International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation

The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) is pleased to announce that net proceeds from its sold-out, one-day ISSTD Regional Conference, "Reflections on Clinical Practice and Clinical Research in Traumatic Stress " with support from Sheppard Pratt Health System, and Towson University featuring presentations generously given by Frank Putnam, M.D., Ruth Lanius, M.D., Ph.D., Richard Loewenstein, M.D., Richard P. Kluft, M.D., Ph.D., and Bethany Brand, Ph.D. generated $24,516. The revenue is earmarked to support the Treatment of Patients with Dissociative Disorders (TOP DD) Study.

The conference drew 207 participants regionally from New York to North Carolina as well as one participant from Ireland and was held at the Conference Center at Sheppard Pratt in Baltimore, Maryland on April 27, 2013. Plans are underway to make some of the presentations from this conference available online in the near future. More information about how to register for and view the program online is coming soon.

The TOP DD Study is the largest and only international treatment study of dissociative disorders. Leaders in the field of dissociative disorders recognized that there were few research studies assessing how dissociative disordered patients respond to treatment. This paucity of research contributes to the limited awareness of dissociative disorders and a lack of training for treatment providers.

A team of investigators came together and established the Treatment of Patients with Dissociative Disorders (TOP DD) Study, or TOP DD Study, led by Bethany Brand, Ph.D., and recruited approximately 290 therapists and their patients from 18 countries around the world.

The success of the study is attributed to the generous sharing of time and treatment experiences by the participants. The study has operated on a very small budget from private donations. In reflecting upon its germination and subsequent successes, Bethany Brand, PhD, Principle Investigator of the study and Professor of Psychology at Towson University, stated that having so many therapists and clients involved "truly makes this a grassroots effort and a community success."

The initial TOP DD Study is providing fascinating insights into how dissociative disorders patients respond to treatment. The 6, 18, and 30 month follow-up data indicated that patients showed fewer symptoms of depression, dissociation, and PTSD, as well as lower levels of general distress, fewer suicide attempts and hospitalizations, and less self-injurious behaviors and dangerous behaviors than at the beginning of the study. Additionally, therapists rated patients as having higher adaptive functioning at follow-up. Currently, the researchers have completed the 30-month follow-up data collection and are continuing to
analyze their findings to learn more about how different variables (e.g., treatment alliance) impact dissociative disorders treatment. Thus far, the study has led to six publications about its findings.

The goal of the next phase of the TOPDD study is to develop a web-based psychoeducational intervention for patients and their therapists to participate in to determine if participation in the study is associated with decreased symptoms and improved functioning for individuals with dissociative disorders. The results of this study will have important implications for the dissociative disorders field which is particularly important as the medical and mental health fields require empirical evidence that treatments benefit patients.

The TOP DD team appreciates gifts of all sizes to support the study. Funds will be used to create the website and psychoeducational videos as well as support data gathering and analyses. There are two ways to make gifts to the TOP DD study that qualify as charitable contributions to an IRC Section 501(c) (3) public charity for federal income and estate tax purposes. Sheppard Pratt Health System’s Office of Philanthropy is accepting donations to support the TOP DD study via its Kate Fund by clicking here. Towson University’s Foundation Inc. is also accepting contributions for the TOP DD Study via the Psychology Department click here. Please indicate that you want the gift to be used to support the TOP DD Study when making a gift.

TOP DD Research Team
Bethany Brand, Ph.D. –Primary Investigator
Catherine Classen, Ph.D. –Research Consultant
Ruth Lanius, Ph.D., M.D. –Research Consultant
Richard J. Loewenstein, M.D. –Research Consultant
Clare Pain, M.D. –Research Consultant
Frank Putnam, M.D. –Research Consultant
Amie Myrick, M.S., L.G.P.C. – Research Coordinator

TOP DD Research Team Publications:


Brand, B.L., & Stadnik, R. (in press). What contributes to predicting change in treatment of dissociation: Initial levels of dissociation, PTSD, or overall distress? *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*.


Myrick, A.C., Brand, B.L., & Putnam, F.W. (in press). For better or worse: The role of revictimization and stress in the course of treatment for dissociative disorders. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*.

**TOP DD Research Team Future Presentations**
Join us at our symposium at the upcoming *International Society of the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) Annual International Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, November 14-18, 2013*. The TOP DD study's presentations will feature the valuable information that we are continuing to learn through patient and therapists' participation in this study.

**Sources**
http://www.towson.edu/topddstudy/
www.isst-d.org