Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

12th Issue

July 2018

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President

Nhung Hendy

Welcome to another issue of TNF Newsletter where you will find for the first time, two poems I wrote immediately after losing Thao. I hope that the poems will help someone who is struggling with losing a child. If you constantly struggle with meeting expectations either self-imposed or others-imposed, you will find strength after reading the "Unique" poem. I hope that you value and love yourself for who you are, and not what others want you to be. In the wake of this week's suicides of Fashion Designer, Kate Spade, and Anthony Bourdain, a Celebrity Chef and TV Personality, I think the "Finding Hope" poem will help you see that life is so precious even in the darkest hours to hold on to and not to give up. As usual, we included in this issue some of the most recent research findings on suicide and suicide prevention.

We awarded two $1,000 scholarships to Alexandra (Lexie) Hagen from Loch Raven High school and Byshera Williams from Drexel University. Lexie will attend Goucher College this fall majoring in art/videography. Byshera is a rising junior and associate editor for the Smart Set, an online magazine at Drexel's Pennoni Honors College.

Thanks so much for your support over the past year! In addition to continuing to fund $1,000

scholarships at Loch Raven High and Drexel University in Thao's memory, we have conducted outreach activities at events including the Towson University Out of the Darkness walk on April 14th of this year. With your financial support, we will get the scholarships endowed so the money can be given yearly from the interest alone.

This fall, we are launching our art show event, held on Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018 from 7 to 10 P.M. at the Grey Matter Gallery in the Cork Factory in Baltimore's Station North Arts District. Please save the date! Consider submitting artwork (due September 21) or coming out to support the Foundation that night, where there will be food, musical entertainment, and great art for sale! Tickets come with the price of art submission or buy a $20 ticket for two to come as a shopper. More details can be found on line at www.tnscholarshipforthearts.org/artcompetition.

Support the Foundation, mental health awareness, and see some up-and-coming artistic talent right here in Baltimore!

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Michael Biderman, Director
Philip Hall, Director
Nhung T. Hendy, President
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Unique
By Abimbola T. Alabi

Thao in Junior year at Loch Raven High School - 2009

Because I know who I am,
I'm at ease and free.
I can't be like others,
And they can't be me.

I've got fading scars.
An unusual physique,
But it all works together
To make me unique.

I've got hidden strengths,
Some obvious flaws.
Still I am who I am,
For better, for worse.

I don't have to blend in;
I won't live a lie.
I can't please everyone;
I won't even try.

Some call me proud;
Others stare at me in alarm.
But I'm no one to bother,
Because I know who I am.

Finding Hope
By Pat A. Fleming

I've always viewed life from the side
lines,
Just watching it passing me by,
In the past too afraid to just let go
and live,
And lately too tired to try.

I've envied the people around me,
So invested in living each day.
While I spent my time hiding out
from the world,
And searching for ways to escape.

For most of my life, I truly believed,
I was here to help somebody else,
But now it's so clear it was just an
excuse.
To avoid living life for myself.

It's sad that our lives and the pain we
endure,
Can weaken our strength to move
on,
But if we get lost in the scars of our
past,
Without knowing our lives will be
gone.

It's true people are disappointing,
They can turn in the blink of an eye,
But we can't avoid hurting each
other,
When we all want a chance at this
life.

But there's something I've learned
through the wisdom of age,
A truth about all of our lives,
And that is no matter what path we
each take,
In the end, we just want to survive.

So the time has now come to
conquer my fears,
And to stand up and face a new day,
Let the hurts of my past wash away
with my tears,
And stop letting my life slip away.

The Robin
By Nhung Nguyen

This morning during my routine
workout
A robin flying by our door, I see
Perching on the cherry blossom tree,
wow!
The tree I planted in your memory.

Is the robin my little baby, dear?
I can't resist the thought of an angel
Sending me sunny and spring weather
here.
How good it is, I believe in fable.

A little sparrow's how you called
yourself
And the musical blog you wrote, how
swell.
I cry many nights I spend by myself
Wishing my baby would be back and
well

My baby's gone but I hope she's happy
Wherever she is, I have to believe.

I saw you in my dream
By Nhung Nguyen

You came to me within a dream I had
How beautiful your smile your face of
youth;
Your words to me, they made me
think, how sad.
Of days now gone, your image on this
earth imbues.

U.S. Suicide rates increased more than 25% since 1999
Summarized by Nhung Hendy from
www.cnn.com, June 8th 2018

According to the latest report released by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), suicide rates went up by 25% across the U.S. during the period of 1999 to 2016. Of the 50 states, twenty-five saw an increase of suicide rates by more tan 30%. Of those who died by suicide, more than half had not been diagnosed with a mental illness.

In 2016, about 45,000 took their own lives. The data compiled by the National Vital Statistics show the trend is getting worse. For example, the suicide rates vary across states with mid-west and mountain sates saw the most increase (58% in North Dakota) and 6% in Delaware. The only state that experienced a decrease in suicide rate is Nevada (1% decrease from 1999 to 2016). Nevada's suicide rate was still considered high, averaging 22 suicides for every 100,000 people during the years studied. Montana experienced the highest suicide rate in the U.S. (29 for every 100,000 people) while the District of Columbia the lowest (7 for every 100,000 people). The most common method of suicide was firearm, followed by hanging or suffocation, followed by poisoning. There were opioids in about a third of suicides by poisoning.

Circumstances, such as the loss of (or problems in) a relationship, were likely to trigger a suicide among those who had not been diagnosed with a mental health condition (54% of the cases). Men were three to five times more likely than women to commit suicides, especially those in the 45 to 64 age group. The above means that suicide can happen to everybody. Please call 1-800-273-8255, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, to speak to someone who will be able to provide free and confidential support 24/7. If you want to help someone in crisis, you can start with having a conversation with them, keeping them safe, helping them connect and then follow up with them. Not all suicides can be prevented, but many are preventable.

Challenges in diagnosing pediatric bipolar disorder
Summarized by Michael Biderman

It is possible to diagnose Pediatric Bipolar Disorder with an accuracy level that is quite acceptable if the clinician has the appropriate resources. Unfortunately, the Structured Personal Interview (SPI) that is required for such accurate diagnosis requires time and money that are very often out of reach of practicing clinicians. As would be expected, failure to use an accurate diagnostic procedure can lead to many adverse consequences, including fatalities. Failure to detect the presence of Pediatric Bipolar Disorder may result in prescription of drugs and therapies for the wrong disease. Similarly, incorrectly diagnosing a condition as Pediatric Bipolar Disorder may result in equally inappropriate prescriptions for the wrong drugs and wrong therapies. Thus, researchers such as the authors of this study look for diagnostic procedures that are quicker and more affordable than the gold standard SPI diagnosis but whose diagnostic accuracy will be nearly as high as that of the gold standard.

The first diagnostic method is a procedure that combines two basic pieces of information (the percentage of persons having the condition in the population to which the patient belongs and the score of the patient on a paper and pencil (or computerized version of that diagnostic scale). In this paper, the scale used was the Parent General Behavior Inventory-10 Item Mania scale (PGBI10M.) The ultimate result is an estimate of the probability that the patient has Pediatric Bipolar Disorder. If that probability exceeds a predetermined threshold value, the clinician concludes that the disorder is present and treats it accordingly.

The second procedure combines the results of multiple indicators and yields a probability estimate using logistic regression. It is similar in concept but more complicated in execution than the nomogram method described above. Because of its mathematical complexity, the Logisitic Regression Analysis procedure requires the use of a computer and requires some expertise in regression analysis. The third procedure is called the LASSO technique, this procedure involves the combination of multiple characteristics of the patient to arrive at a probability estimate of the target condition – Pediatric Bipolar Disorder in this case. It is much more complicated than Logistic Regression Analysis, requiring use of a computer, the appropriate software, and expertise of the clinician on the use of the software.

The above techniques' efficacy to correctly diagnose Pediatric Bipolar Disorder was evaluated in two different clinical samples. The LASSO model performed best in the original sample, followed by the Logistic Regression Analysis procedure, with the simple nomogram method least accurate. The authors described their results in the following statement, "In terms of balancing feasibility, accuracy, and calibration, the Naive Bayes approach and the probability nomogram perform well—the accuracy remained good upon external cross-validation, and the calibration was good if there was reasonable information about the base rate." This study presents key information comparing different procedures for diagnosing disorders, such as Pediatric Bipolar Disorder. Cleary, more studies like this one are needed.

Source:
Youngstrom, Halverson, Youngstrom, Lindhiem, and Findling (2018). Evidence-based assessment from simple clinical judgments to statistical learning: Evaluating a range of options using pediatric bipolar disorder as a diagnostic challenge. *Clinical Psychological Science, 6*, 243-265.