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Contact: Sarah Marshall, Office of External Affairs

Uniformed Services University Psychiatrists Author New Handbook to Aid Diagnosis of Psychiatric Illness

Bethesda, Md. – Early on in their training, medical students learn the signs and symptoms of most common medical conditions. For example, they can describe the difference between heart sounds within the first few weeks of training. Except when it comes to psychiatric disorders. Instead, they memorize lists and struggle to differentiate a loss of appetite with weight loss. Without a clear understanding of specific psychiatric symptoms, differentials are compromised and errors in diagnosis become more likely. To better prepare future physicians, and to help current physicians better diagnose important conditions effectively, several active-duty and prior service psychiatrists from the Uniformed Services University have released a new handbook, *The Medical Evaluation of Psychiatric Symptoms*.

The book, authored by experts in the field from both the civilian and military sector, provides psychiatrists and physicians who routinely evaluate psychiatric symptoms. The book includes chapters focused on various specific symptoms, such as loss of appetite, irritability, anxiety, insomnia, dizziness, memory loss, concentration, visual hallucinations, and muscle tension. Each chapter provides a comprehensive description of the symptom to include historical understandings, definitions from other specialties, and cultural considerations. This is followed by a differential for each specific psychiatric symptom. This differential includes positive predictive values for other relevant signs, symptoms, and laboratory and radiologic findings. These are important metrics for physicians to consider if they are to confidentiality rule-out potential medical etiologies of psychiatric symptoms.

“This book serves as an important resource that will ultimately help dramatically improve patient outcomes and could revolutionize how we train physicians on the basics of psychiatric disorders,” said Army Col. (Dr.) Vincent Capaldi, chair of Psychiatry at the Uniformed Services University.

“Similar to how military mental health officers led the creation of the DSM, the manual for all psychiatric diagnoses, out of a need to better understand military patients, this book has the potential to reframe and advance the diagnostic paradigms of psychiatry today,” said Lt Col Eric Meyer, handbook co-editor.

Developing this new book was an integrative process, involving a collaboration of national experts on psychiatry from USU, as well as experts from the University of California (San Francisco and Davis), Stanford University, Baylor Scott and White Health, San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, Wright Patterson Medical Center, the National Consortium Psychiatry Residency Program at Walter Reed, Naval Hospital Jacksonville, the U.S. Navy’s 3rd Marine Division, Marine Corps Medical Home New River, University of Texas Health Sciences Center, the Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Unity in Groton, Connecticut, and the U.S. Public Health Service.

About the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the nation's federal health sciences university and the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. USU also has graduate programs in oral biology, biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research. The University's research program covers a wide range of areas important to both the military and public health. For more information about USU and its programs, visit www.usuhs.edu.