

Central Massachusetts MIND Network

November 2022 – Fall Newsletter



Thank you for your ongoing support of UMass MIND! The Central Massachusetts MIND Network was developed to create a more inclusive community surrounding mental health among patients, family members, mental health advocates, local organizations, and providers within the Greater Worcester area. Over the years, we have shared groundbreaking mental health research, provided local mental health services, hosted various community events, and connected over 500 community members. We hope that this network will continue to serve as a catalyst to promote collaboration among the Central Massachusetts community!



MOVING FORWARD: COLLABORATION BETWEEN UMASS MIND AND ZENTANGLE

Last year, UMass MIND collaborated with Zentangle, a mindfulness-based art form, to create a pilot program for individuals with serious mental illness (SMI). Due to the success of our pilot program, we are now creating a new, larger scale program in collaboration with Zentangle for those with SMI!

[READ MORE](#) 

UMASS MIND LAUNCHES NEW FOOD4THOUGHT NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SMI

UMass MIND is launching a new Food4Thought nutrition program to take place in-person and build upon the lessons and feedback from our pilot program. This upcoming program will partner with Genesis and Community Healthlink group homes!

[READ MORE](#) 

UMASS MIND WRAPS UP FIRST ROUND OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING STUDY

UMass MIND has completed the first round of the Social Skills Training (SST) program and is expected to begin a second round this month! This program is aimed at teaching those with SMI social skills to help them better acclimate to daily life and will be conducted in weekly sessions over zoom!

[READ MORE](#) 

Central Massachusetts MIND Network

November 2022 – Fall Newsletter



Thank you for your ongoing support for UMass MIND! The Central Massachusetts MIND Network was developed to create a more inclusive community surrounding mental health among patients, family members, mental health advocates, local organizations, and providers within the Greater Worcester area. Over the years, we have shared groundbreaking mental health research, provided local mental health services, hosted various community events, and connected over 500 community members. We hope that this network will continue to serve as a catalyst to promote collaboration among the Central Massachusetts community!

MOVING FORWARD: COLLABORATION BETWEEN UMASS MIND AND ZENTANGLE

BY TARYNN PACHECO

Zentangle is a mindfulness-based art form that involves creative drawing on a small tile to combine with others' tiles to create one cohesive work. Many people around the world have been practicing Zentangle as a means for coping with stress and various mental symptoms.

Earlier this year, the UMass MIND team traveled to the Spaulding R Aldrich Heritage Gallery and got to experience “Beyond Zentangle”, a beautiful assortment of 30 different Zentangle inspired pieces. This exhibit is the product of a collaboration between ValleyCAST (Blackstone Valley Culture, Arts, Science Together), and OpenSky Community Services. The exhibit was centered around reaching beyond small tiles and combining Zentangle with other personal passions and skills. One of the most prominent artist stories is that of a woman who combined her two therapeutic passions of kayaking and Zentangle and created a life-size Zentangle inspired kayak. Tangles stretch from one end of the kayak to the other, with symbols of peace, freedom, and tranquility, the same qualities the artist described as having obtained through practicing Zentangle. Because of the impact these two activities had on her life, she wanted to combine the two, highlighting the way that they made her feel.

More recently, UMass MIND partnered with Zentangle to host a workshop directed by the founders, Rick and Maria, at the UMass Chan Medical School. Medical students were able to learn and practice the Zentangle method, experiencing the therapeutic benefits firsthand.

UMass MIND has previously worked alongside Zentangle in researching the potential benefits of their method as a form of art intervention for serious mental illness (SMI). Last year, we completed an 8-week virtual Zentangle pilot program for individuals with SMI. The positive preliminary results, which are currently under review for publication, are encouraging. In collaboration with Rick and Maria, a larger scale Zentangle study in this patient population is expected to start in the near future.



UMASS MIND LAUNCHES NEW FOOD4THOUGHT NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SMI

BY BRENNA CHUANG

Individuals with SMI have higher prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, which contribute to a reduced life expectancy by 10 to 20 years compared to the general population. One important modifiable risk factor for these cardiometabolic problems is an unhealthy lifestyle. In 2021, UMass MIND partnered with Genesis Club of Worcester and delivered a virtual nutrition education program, Food4Thought, to community members with SMI in the greater Worcester area. The program was a great success and has been accepted by the journal *Academic Psychiatry*.¹ In partnership with Genesis Club, Community Healthlink, and other community partners, UMass MIND has developed an in-person nutrition and cooking program for individuals with SMI.



MD/PhD student Lauren, medical student Kai-Lou, and MIND intern Ruben test recipes for the upcoming program

The program will consist of educational sessions that teach participants skills on how to eat a balanced meal, cook healthy while on a budget, practice mindful eating, and understand the impact their diet can have on mental illness and comorbid health conditions. Cooking sessions will allow participants to learn to cook recipes individually and apply the skills learned from the educational portion of the program.

UMass MIND developed this exciting new nutrition program using the feedback from participants in the pilot program. The new Food4Thought program will focus on topics and information that past participants felt were most impactful and resourceful.

Interested in learning more? Contact us at 508-856-6463 or MIND@umassmed.edu!

1. Cheung, A., Dutta, P., Kovic, Y., Stojcevski, M., Fan, X. Food4Thought: a medical trainee led, remotely delivered nutrition outreach program, for individuals with serious mental illness. *Academic Psychiatry*, in press.

UMASS MIND WRAPS UP FIRST ROUND OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

BY KALEA BARGER

This past August, the UMass MIND Program completed its first round of the Social Skills Training (SST) program as part of a multi-site study funded by Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute. The SST curriculum consists of seven different modules, each relating to an important social skill: Living Independently in the Community, Communicating Effectively, Making and Keeping Friends, Making the Most of Leisure Time, Using Medications Effectively, Healthy Living, and Making the Most of a Doctor's Visit. The SST sessions take place weekly on Zoom for 12 months.

The next SST group is expected to start in Fall 2022. The new group will be led by Dr. Maite Cintron Pastrana, a psychiatry resident and a leader of the UMass MIND's Early Detection and Intervention module, alongside UMass MIND interns Catherine Leonard and Kalea Barger, supported by our research coordinator, Taylor Latter.

CURRENT STUDIES: ACTIVELY RECRUITING!

Study #1: Substance Use Study




The purpose of this study is to see whether Brexpiprazole, an FDA approved antipsychotic medication for schizophrenia treatment, may help reduce substance abuse in individuals with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. This study is 3 months in length with weekly meetings.

Study #2: Negative Symptom Study

Are you or someone you know living with schizophrenia and struggling with negative symptoms such as social withdrawal or apathy? The Negative Symptom study seeks to determine if an investigational medication, AVP-786, is effective in the treatment of negative symptoms.

Our studies are conducted at 26 Queen Street, Worcester, MA 01610. You will be compensated for your time being involved in any study. If you are interested or would like more information about any of our studies, please call 508-856-MIND (6463) or email MIND@umassmed.edu

Find us on social media for weekly updates about our program!

 @umassmind
 [facebook.com/Umassmind](https://www.facebook.com/Umassmind)
 <https://www.umassmed.edu/umass-mind>