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Foreword

Meera V. Patel
Loyola University of Chicago

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Foreword

The *Annals of Health Law and Life Sciences* Editorial Board is proud to present the Summer 2022 Issue, the second edition of our thirty-first volume to date. Each year, our Editorial Board seeks out articles covering important and contemporary topics within the health law and life sciences community. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the concerns surrounding mental health, causing a recent evolution of mental health care practice and policy. Thus, the Beazley Institute's Fall 2021 Symposium explored a wide variety of areas pertaining to this overall theme. The incredible selected pieces herein were originally presented during the symposium and contribute to the growing area of mental health care practice and policy. I am honored to present the following contributions of outstanding knowledge and research to the health law and life sciences field.

Claire Sontheimer's and Michael Ulrich's article, *Addressing Stigma and False Beliefs About Mental Health: A New Direction for Mental Health Parity Advocacy*, opens with a discussion about the parity problem in the United States and how legislation still lacks mental health parity. Specifically, they mention how the Mental Health Parity Act, Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, and the Affordable Care Act all address mental health law but fail to mend the gap between mental health and insurance coverage. They then explain how reducing stigma against mental and behavioral health will impact the effectiveness of current parity laws and future legislation. In order to reduce stigma, Sontheimer and Ulrich argue that being proactive about the issues instead of simply addressing the problem would be most effective. For instance, anti-stigma campaigns have been proven to educate individuals about mental health and substance use disorders, which helps to reduce negative feelings about the disorders. These campaigns can take multiple formats and will increase support for mental health parity, which will in turn put pressure on insurance companies to control costs. Sontheimer and Ulrich conclude that addressing the issue of stigma will help to transform mental health parity.

The second article, *Pandemic Response Through Whole Person Care: The Intersection of Physical and Mental Health and the Law*, shifts from a focus on the mental health parity to focusing on planning and providing care for the whole person. Jennifer Smith,

Elizabeth Lattner, Dr. Allison Kreiner, Dr. Edward Kilbane, and Dr. Keyvan Ravakhah begin with a discussion about social determinants of health and their effects on racial disparities. They chronicle this approach to care through their own experience managing a medical-legal partnership. To begin discussing the potential impact of these partnerships, the article starts with a brief history of medical-legal partnerships in the United States and then shifts focus to these partnerships in Cleveland, Ohio. Specifically, Smith *et. al.* provides a summary of the St. Vincent Charity Medical Center Medical-Legal Partnership and how the partnership functioned before the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, they discuss the effects of the pandemic, and how it has limited visits to the psychiatric department and inpatient and outpatient interactions. Lastly, Smith *et. al.* describes St. Vincent Charity Medical Center's effort to mitigate the effects of the pandemic by implementing a pilot program, which focused on referrals to the medical-legal partnership and ways to embed this process into the healthcare system. They end with a recommendation that legal entities implement a medical-legal partnership like the one in the pilot program to encourage preventative care, which would be especially helpful during a pandemic.

Finally, Leah Fowler and Jessica Roberts close with *Mind the App*. In their article, Fowler and Roberts focus on mental health apps and how policymakers should be wary of gaps in regulation and design. They begin with a discussion providing context on the American mental health crisis and specifically the barriers against individuals to receive mental health treatment. Fowler and Roberts then describe how mental health apps can be a low-cost and effective way to help mitigate the barriers. However, they also recognize that mental health apps are not uniformly regulated, and can lead to different consumer protections, making consumers vulnerable. They then discuss how the inconsistency of regulations can lead to consumer confusion and propose that a voluntary labeling system would help combat this confusion. Fowler and Roberts further explain that the labeling system would allow app developers to provide information about the functionality of the app and support this with scientific evidence. This labeling system would be beneficial for many stakeholders and is a first step in addressing consumer confusion surrounding mental health apps.

On behalf of all staff members of *Annals of Health Law and Life Sciences*, I would like to thank Claire Sontheimer, Michael Ulrich, Jennifer Smith, Elizabeth Lattner, Dr. Allison Kreiner, Dr. Edward Kilbane, Dr. Keyvan Ravakhah, Leah Fowler, and Jessica Roberts for honoring *Annals* with their incredible works of scholarship. This issue exemplifies the passion, dedication, and professionalism of everyone involved. The Editorial Board and I would like to thank each Associate Editor for their attentiveness, patience, and enthusiasm during the editing process. Additionally, I would like to recognize the exceptional work of Edwin Caro, *Annals* Publications Editor, for his unwavering commitment to this journal and its authors. Additionally, I must recognize the outstanding work of our Symposium Editor and Technical Production Editor, Abigail Higgins, as well as our Marketing & Coordinating Editor and Technical Production Editor, Joshua Wiedner, who continue to go beyond the call of their roles to ensure this journal's excellence. I would also like to thank our Advance Directive Editors, Mambwe Mutanuka and Sarah Ryan, whose untiring efforts have brought this issue to life. Furthermore, I would like to recognize and thank our remarkable Senior Editors: Cristal Nova, Luke Cummings, Eileen Gabriel, and Michael Kemel for their excellent work through the editing process. And finally, I would like to thank our supportive advisors at the Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy, including Professors Nadia Sawicki and Kristin Finn, for their continued guidance and support for this issue and its purpose.

Meera V. Patel, Editor-in-Chief