AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowship in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, supported by AACAP’s Endowment Fund

The AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowships, supported by AACAP’s Endowment Fund, offer an opportunity for medical students to explore a career in child and adolescent psychiatry, gain valuable work experience, and meet leaders in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry. The fellowship opportunity provides up to $3,500 for 12 weeks of clinical or research training under a child and adolescent psychiatrist mentor. The fellowships are administered through AACAP’s Department of Research, Grants, and Workforce, AACAP’s Training and Education Committee, under the direction of Sanea Jacobson, MD, and A. Lee Lewis, MD, along with AACAP’s Committee on Medical Students and Residents, under the direction of George “Bud” Vana, MD, MS, and Ihebta Zalpuri, MD.

**Sarah B. Abdallah, BS**  
Yale School of Medicine  
Project: Genetic Contribution of Copy-Number Variation to OCD  
Mentor: Thomas V. Fernandez, MD

**Kara Banson, BA**  
University of Massachusetts  
Project: Educational Navigation for Youth in Foster Care: A Summer Pilot Aimed at Building Pathways for Educational Success and Mental Health Resiliency within an Integrated Care Clinic  
Mentor: Wynne Morgan, MD

**Samuel J. Eggers, BS**  
Tulane University  
Project: Screening for Social Determinants of Health in Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation  
Mentor: Mary Margaret Gleason, MD

**Ariana G. Rosario Fusté, BS**  
Central University of the Caribbean  
Project: Internet Gaming Disorder Prevalence in the Hispanic Adolescent Community  
Mentor: Ohel Soto Raices, MD  
Ms. Rosario Fusté’s award was partially funded by the Ruth and Peter Metz Family Foundation.
Catherine A. Ha, BS
University of California, Riverside
Project: Barriers and Facilitators Affecting Mental Health Service Utilization Among Asian American and Pacific Islander Youths in Riverside County
Mentor: Richard J. Lee, MD

Edwin J. Klein, BS
University of Michigan
Project: Simplifying Somatization: Reducing Healthcare Utilization With a Clinical Practice Guideline for Pediatric Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders
Mentors: Nasuh Malas, MD, MPH, and Kris Kullgren, PhD

Sarah M. Laudon, BS
Rosalind Franklin University of Science and Medicine
Project: Analyses of the BLOC and BLAS Rating Scales and Their Impact on Adolescents Age 11–17 Diagnosed With Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and/or Anxiety Disorder
Mentor: Lin Lu, MD, PhD

Andrew D. Rylaarsdam, BS
Midwestern University
Project: Factors Associated With Treatment Participation in Children’s Mental Health
Mentors: Kelley A. Volpe, MD, Liza M. Suarez, PhD, and Lauren E. Cox, LCSW (University of Illinois at Chicago, Institute for Juvenile Research)

Marc A. Skiles, BS
University of Wisconsin
Project: Modeling Grey Matter Changes During Typical Childhood Development
Mentors: Ryan Herrlinga, MD, PhD, and Justin Russell, PhD
Anne K. Tulisial, BS
Wright State University
Project: CYP2C19 Metabolizer Status Predicts Escitalopram Pharmacokinetics in Adolescents With Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Mentor: Jeffrey R. Strawn, MD (University of Cincinnati)

Christopher G. Viamontes, MA
University of Illinois at Chicago
Project: Maternal 15q11-q13 Duplication Syndrome With ASD: Mood Stabilization by Carbamazepine
Mentor: Edwin H. Cook, MD
Mr. Viamonte’s award was partially funded by the Ruth and Peter Metz Family Foundation.

Margaret Y. Yau, MS, BS
University of California, Riverside
Project: Mental Health Service Needs, Utilization, and Associated Factors in Diverse Child Welfare Population
Mentors: Takesha Cooper, MD, MS, and Carl Feinstein, MD
To members of the AACAP executive committee:

I am writing to express my thanks for your support of my recent time as an AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellow. During this time, I began work on a project to explore the genetic basis of obsessive-compulsive disorder and to identify new risk genes that could be associated with the disorder.

I developed an interest in applying human genetics to the study of neuropsychiatric disease in college. As an undergraduate and post-graduate student, I studied gene regulatory mechanisms implicated in autism spectrum disorder. At the start of medical school, I began learning computational modeling to study the genetic bases of schizophrenia and Alzheimer’s disease. During my summer fellowship, I continued to build on these previous research experiences worked on developing my computational skills.

In the future, I aim to work at the interface of child psychiatry and genetics as both a clinician and a researcher. I want to be a clinician with a good understanding of how human genomic data are analyzed and of the nature of genetic variation in psychiatric disease. As genetic testing becomes more widespread, I anticipate a need for more physicians who can counsel patients on their results. I especially want to work with pediatric patients, for whom there is a dearth of clinicians. My conversations with established psychiatrists at the AACAP Annual Meeting served to confirm this interest.

Along with my clinical work, I plan to continue to conduct research in psychiatric genetics. Right now, many psychiatric conditions are known to have significant heritability but still have poorly understood genetic etiologies. Although some patients currently benefit from genetic testing, there is much more to discover about the genetics of neuropsychiatric disease before clinicians will be able to derive meaningful findings from many patients’ test results. I want to be a part of this discovery process. I envision accomplishing this through collaboration with other researchers in consortia, lending my clinical perspective to research questions and borrowing from their technical expertise. Over the course of my career, I also hope to help train younger generations of psychiatry trainees in genomic approaches to studying complex disease.

I cannot thank you enough for your generosity in supporting my research. This project comes at an opportune time in both my training and the advancement of psychiatric research. My formative experiences from the fellowship program will help as I carve out my path as a future physician-scientist in the field of child psychiatry.

Sincerely,

Sarah Abdallah
November 3, 2019

Dear AACAP Endowment Fund (EF),

Thank you for supporting my work as an AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellow. I am grateful for your support as it granted me an invaluable summer experience. For ten weeks, I was immersed in a setting where I learned about childhood trauma and the tools pediatricians and child adolescent psychiatrists use to address this trauma and promote healing. I dived deep into learning how the child welfare system operated, and how it intersects with the court system, medical care and the school system. In brief, I saw physicians who made positive contributions step outside their silos, and work collaboratively with other physicians, local organizations, and policymakers. I could not have had a better summer.

Thank you also for the invitation to participate and present my summer work at the AACAP 66th Annual Meeting. This was my first medical conference as a medical student. It was an exciting week filled with interesting events, workshops and debates. Moreover, I enjoyed meeting members of the AACAP family. At the Junior Research Scholar Lunch, I was seated next to Dr. Benoit, who served as a past president of AACAP. I learned about her inspiring path to medicine and what called her to child and adolescent psychiatry. I attended a clinical consultation breakfast and was surprised at how small the gathering was (there were about 15 attendees). We went around the table sharing a brief introduction. I was intimidated at first as I was the only medical student. Yet, to my surprise, I was welcomed by the physicians around the table as they were eager to hear about my path and interests. I left Chicago feeling refueled and energized to get back to school and continue my summer work. The conference showed me that there is so much possibilities within the discipline of child and adolescent psychiatry. All of this would not have been possible without your support! Thank you.

With gratitude,

Kara Micah Banson
Dear AACAP Executive Committee,

Thank you for the amazing opportunity to participate in the AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowship. I have learned more about Child and Adolescent Psychiatry than I could have imagined as a result. I have been exposed to exciting research happening in the field, humanizing clinical work, and inspiring mentorship as a result of this fellowship, and I am astoundingly grateful for all of it.

Thank you again, and I look forward to continued involvement in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and AACAP.

Sam Eggers
November 18, 2019
Catherine Ha
21637 E Fern Glen Ct
Walnut, CA 91789
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(626)391-5483

AACAP’s Executive Committee
c/o AACAP’s Research, Grants and Workforce Department – SMSF EF
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

To the AACAP Executive Committee,

I am writing to thank you for your generous support through the AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowship. I am deeply grateful to have been selected as a recipient of this fellowship as I continue my educational journey at the UC Riverside School of Medicine and explore the exciting field of child and adolescent psychiatry.

Through this fellowship, I was able to conduct a research project on a topic that I hold very close to my heart. My project examined the barriers and facilitators toward mental health service utilization for Asian American and Pacific Islander youths in Riverside County, in which I conducted semi-structured interviews with Asian American adults. From these interviews, I connected with the participants in their cultural narratives and gained an invaluable learning experience in how mental health outcomes are deeply rooted in an individual’s cultural and socioeconomic background. In addition to this, I had such a transformative and inspiring experience attending the AACAP Annual Meeting and in meeting the leaders of this field.

As I continue my medical education, I am so thrilled for this opportunity to learn to heal communities at large. I am determined to become a physician who not only provides medical care for underrepresented and medically underserved communities, but also serves as an advocate for mental health care and education as a basic human right for all. Thank you again for your belief and investment in medical students like me.

Sincerely,

Catherine Ha
UC Riverside School of Medicine
MD Candidate, Class of 2022
AACAP’s Executive Committee  
c/o Research, Grants and Workforce Department – SMSF EF  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016

To the AACAP Executive Committee,

As a recipient of the AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowship, I am reaching out to express my heartfelt and sincere gratitude. The SMSF has provided so many wonderful opportunities—some expected and others unexpected—for which I cannot begin to express my appreciation.

The award allowed me to focus my professional time for more than two months on one of my most keen interests—Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders (SSRDs)—in multiple scholarly venues. It gave me the time to perform complex analyses for a cost evaluation of our clinical pathway, to complete the majority of the data collection for a mixed-methods perceptions study, and to begin the production of an online Continuing Medical Education course for primary care providers regarding SSRD care in youth.

And while the ability to focus on these projects was incredibly valuable, the opportunity to actually attend the AACAP Annual meeting is absolutely priceless. I learned a great deal from many presentations, symposiums, and workshops, met wonderful mentors, and also had innumerable opportunities to network and meet trainees, faculty, and leadership from institutions across the country. Though I was not expecting this to be the case, attending AACAP for most of the week was one of the most important opportunities I have had all year!

Again, thank you so very much for awarding me with this fellowship. The opportunities it presented will certainly continue to impact me and my career for the foreseeable future. I can say with complete honesty that this fellowship has impacted my career in many ways, and for that I am deeply grateful.

Sincerely,

Edwin Joseph Klein  
MD/MPH Candidate  
University of Michigan Medical School  
University of Michigan School of Public Health
Dear Executive Committee,

My name is Sarah Laudon and I was one of the students selected to receive the Summer Medical Student Fellowship. I am currently a second year medical student at Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science.

By far this has been the best opportunity I have pursued in my academic career. This experience allowed me to combine my love of research, develop clinical skills, find a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry mentor and introduced me to connections I can use throughout my career.

I was able to work with Dr. Lu at the RFU Vernon Hills, IL Behavioral Health Clinic. This is one of the psychiatry sites for Chicago Medical School. Dr. Lu not only became a friend and teacher, but a mentor. Her relationships with patients truly inspired me all summer. Several of her patients would run her office upon entering as they were so excited to see her. Parents told me over and over as I checked them in how blessed they were to have found Dr. Lu and the impact Dr. Lu has had on their child’s and family’s life. In the midst of board season upon me, it is this impact I will keep reminding myself of when the studying gets long and difficult.

I was able to start and complete a project from May until October which is a feat I am proud of. Because of this, Dr. Lu has asked me to stay on at the clinic and we have decided to make it a research site for other students interested in psychiatry. We are in the process of setting this up through Chicago Medical School. The impact of this experience will carry far and I am already working with students to help them apply to the program in March 2020.

Before I began this experience, I knew I wanted to work with children. Two of my brothers have special needs – one has suffered great side effects as a result of a pediatric brain tumor and my other brother has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, severe developmental delay, and Fragile X Syndrome. My mom recently finished her battle with stage III cancer, right before I began medical school. I had known about psychiatry though all of these experiences with my family but it was this fellowship that put Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the top of my list. I was able to work with children who had a parent battling cancer and I could relate to all the feelings they were experiencing. My brother Tom who has been diagnosed with ASD has behaviors; I got to work with Dr. Lu and discuss medications to help the patient. This was continually reinforced at the conference, especially during the Karl Menninger, MD Plenary talk.
I cannot thank you enough for giving me this opportunity to complete the fellowship and attending the AACAP Annual Meeting. I will carry this fellowship with me as I continue medical school and it reinforced the idea of why I wanted to go into medicine.

Thank you,
Sarah Laudon
November 1, 2019

AACAP’s Executive Committee

c/o AACAP’s Research, Grants and Workforce Department – SMSF EF
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Executive Committee,

My name is Ariana Rosario Fusté and I’m a medical school student from San Juan, P.R. that had the honor of being chosen as a 2019 AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellow thanks to your donation. As a medical student interested in child and adolescent psychiatry from very early in my career, I’m honored and thankful for the amazing opportunity you provided me. It’s through your donation that I was able to not only find a child and adolescent psychiatrist mentor but also achieve an investigation in the Internet Gaming Disorder prevalence among the Hispanic adolescent community. Furthermore, this opportunity allowed me to attend AACAP 66TH Annual Meeting where I had the amazing, unique and first opportunity to present my poster. For me, it serves as inspiration to know that the future of child and adolescent psychiatry is in the hands of leaders that support, understand, respect and welcome the upcoming generation of psychiatrists.

In addition, I am thankful that I had the opportunity to personally meet Dr. Peter Metz (whose organization partially funded my award) and thank him during the “Medical Students, Residents, and Fellows: Meet Life Member Mentors” section. For me, meeting him was the perfect opportunity to personally express my gratitude to the person who allowed me to take my first steps towards a career in psychiatry. It’s incredible to know that there are professionals that understand and support workforce development within under-represented communities.

Through your organization’s generosity, you are shaping the medical careers of those lucky enough to be chosen and sponsored by you. Never forget that the work you are doing and the opportunities that you are providing are making the difference for students whose cultural or socio-economic backgrounds have created limitations in their path towards education and change. I am humble and eternally grateful to have been given the opportunity to be part of the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and to be sponsored by such a dedicated professional.

Sincerely,

Ariana Rosario Fusté- Universidad Central del Caribe Medical School
AACAP Executive Committee

c/o AACAP Research, Grants and Workforce Department – SMSF EF
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

I am writing to thank you for sponsoring me through the AACAP endowment fund. I had an excellent experience completing a summer medical student student fellowship through AACAP. In addition to the research which comprised the majority of my time, I had the opportunity to join CAP fellows at UIC for journal club, clinical observation and training sessions. This gave me a good perspective on child and adolescent psychiatry and graduate medical education. I learned a great deal from my mentors through this program. It was refreshing to be outside the confines of a lecture hall, learning in a clinical setting.

I had further opportunities for mentorship and networking at the AACAP annual meeting in Chicago this fall. Programs such as group mentoring, the medical student and resident breakfast, and meeting life members provided me with the chance to hear the experiences of those well established in CAP. Everyone I interacted with at these events was helpful and encouraging; each shared a unique insight that was new to me. In addition to the mentorship and education events, I attended several workshops. Exploring some things I have an interest in was a great opportunity, I got to learn about motivational interviewing, faith and spirituality in practice, and providing evaluations for asylum seekers. At these workshops, I was able to make more connections, meeting several residents and attendings with similar interests.

I finished my time at the annual meeting presenting my research poster. It had been a challenge to finish the poster after returning to classes this fall, but that hard work was worth it. I am proud of the poster that I presented and all the hard work that it was the product of. Plenty of people stopped to hear about my research. I am thankful for everyone who took the time to listen, ask questions, and provide feedback. I finished my summer experience with a better understanding of child psychiatry, and left the annual meeting with a strong interest in this field. I have experienced AACAP as a welcoming and encouraging community, one that I look forward to being a part of for many years to come.

Thank you for making this experience possible.

Andrew Rylaarsdam
Dear AACAP Executive Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the AACAP Summer Fellowship Program! It has been an invaluable experience for me. Before applying for this fellowship, I was unsure about continuing research in my medical career and about choosing Child Psychiatry as a specialty. While I can’t say I’m sure about Child Psychiatry yet, I can say that the fellowship experience has made me seriously consider Child Psychiatry as my number one choice going into rotations. The experience I had with my mentor and the mentors I met at the conference really helped guide me. I am also sure I want to continue doing research due to the experience that you have allowed me to have.

The opportunities provided to me by this fellowship have significantly impacted my career path and I would not have had them if not for your generous support. I truly cannot thank you enough!

Sincerely,

Marc Skiles
Thank you for providing me with an incredible experience as an AACAP medical student summer fellow. I am honored to have been selected as an award recipient and experience such fulfilling work over the summer. The AACAP community is wonderful! I feel blessed to have become a part of it so early in my medical career and look forward to getting more involved in the future. The Annual Meeting was a breath of fresh air amidst the medical student lifestyle and further reminded me of my “why.” I truly appreciate the opportunity to enhance my knowledge in the field of psychiatry and connect with so many brilliant practicing physicians.

Best,
Anne Tulisiak
Dear Executive Committee,

Thank you for your generous support during my AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowship. With the completion of my first year of medical school I was still very undecided on which path in medicine was right for me. Conducting research, shadowing across the disciplines of child and adolescent psychiatry, and presenting at the AACAP conference was an amazing experience on my journey of discernment, and something I could not have done without your support. After these experiences, I am confident that child and adolescent psychiatry would be a great fit for my personality, strengths, and career aspirations. I feel fortunate for the opportunity to learn about what the field has to offer me now and in the future.

Thank you again for your support and encouragement.

Sincerely,

Christopher Viamontes
Margaret Yau  
6025 Abernathy Dr  
Riverside, CA 92507  

November 17, 2019  

AACAP’s Executive Committee  
c/o AACAP’s Research, Grants and Workforce Department - SMSF EF  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016  

Dear AACAP Executive Committee:

I wish to express the utmost gratitude for the AACAP Summer Medical Student Fellowship (SMSF) award. Being a member of the SMSF program was a tremendously positive experience, allowing me to engage in child and adolescent psychiatry research and attend the AACAP’s 66th Annual Meeting.

In my summer research, I explored the demographics, trends, mental health needs, and mental health service utilization of different racial/ethnic groups in the child welfare population of Riverside County, California. The results of my research were shared with the Riverside University Health Systems-Behavioral Health with the goal of providing insights into implementing mental health services that meet the needs of the diverse child welfare population. Engaging in this research project gave me a better understanding of the mental health needs of children in the child welfare system and motivated me to further study ways to improve the mental health of diverse children populations. During this research experience, I was also fortunate to work with two dedicated mentors, Dr. Takesha Cooper and Dr. Carl Feinstein, who provided me guidance in research as well as career development.

Attending the AACAP Annual Meeting in October this year provided me invaluable opportunities to learn more about child and adolescent psychiatry and to connect with others with similar interests. Through mentoring events at the meeting, I learned from many leaders in the field, who provided me advice towards medical education and career, as well as insights into the wide varieties of opportunities in child and adolescent psychiatry. I also appreciate receiving the recognition at the Junior Research Scholar Luncheon, which was a greatly memorable moment for me.

This fellowship experience has further confirmed my interest in becoming a child and adolescent psychiatry. I am truly grateful for your fellowship support and the impacts it had to help me advance towards my career goal.

Sincerely,

Margaret Yau  
Medical Student  
University of California, Riverside, School of Medicine