

# CLBB News

A newsletter from the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior

December 10, 2020

## CLBB Highlights



### [How Can Aging Judges Know When It's Time to Hang Up the Robe?](#)

American Bar Association | November 21, 2020

In this article, **CLBB Co-Founder and Co-Director Judith Edersheim** and **CLBB Executive Director Francis Shen** discuss the challenges of identifying and responding to cognitive decline in judges.

*Highlight:* "[Shen] suggests that if federal judges undergo mandatory-but confidential-cognitive assessments every five years after joining the bench, they will gain valuable information that helps guide decisions about their future. He contends this solution is 'palatable politically,' since it prioritizes privacy-not even a chief judge would see results. 'It might have made sense 50 years ago, maybe even 30 years ago, to say we're just going to let judges figure it out on their own,' Shen says. 'But medicine and science have advanced so much over the past few decades, and although we have multiple tools for detecting dementia, we're not harnessing that in the law.' Judith Edersheim works with Shen at the MGH Center for Law, Brain & Behavior. As its co-founder and co-director, she also studies aging judges and warns that cognitive testing might not tell the whole story."



### [Detecting Dementia: Technology, Access, and the Law](#)

Harvard Law School | November 16, 2020

"Detecting Dementia: Technology, Access, and the Law," was hosted on Nov. 16 as part of the Project on Law and Applied Neuroscience, a collaboration between the Center for Law, Brain and Behavior at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy, Biotechnology, and Bioethics at Harvard Law School. Early detection of dementia is a hopeful prospect for the treatment of patients, both because it may facilitate early medical intervention, as well as more robust advance care planning.

Panelist **Bruce Price, CLBB Co-Founder and Co-Director**, framed the stakes: "The idea is, can we detect anatomic changes in the brain years and years before we can detect specific cognitive and behavioral functions?" Price continued, "If we can detect earlier, if we can intervene earlier, can we bend the curve? And can we better the outcome?"



### [New York Court Officials Complete Rare Review of Cases Handled by Judge Forced Into Retirement by Dementia](#)

ProPublica | November 20, 2020

A review of dozens of Judge ShawnDya Simpson's cases found the decisions to be rational, a disappointment for a man whose claims of innocence had been one of the judge's last cases. **CLBB Executive Director Francis Shen** discusses the outcome of this review.

*Highlight:* "Francis Shen, a lawyer and professor who has studied America's aging judiciary, for whom questions of impairment have become more acute, said he was not surprised by the outcome of the review. 'It would be difficult to determine after the fact the ways in which gradual but real cognitive decline might affect courtroom decision-making and rulings,' Shen said. 'Just because rulings are not 'irrational' does not mean they are not potentially problematic.'"

## Faculty Research and News



### [Atypical Forms of Dementia Are Being Diagnosed More Often In People In Their 50s and 60s](#)

The Washington Post | December 8, 2020

**CLBB Faculty Member Bradford Dickerson** was quoted in an article discussing the growing number of people in midlife diagnosed with an atypical form of dementia.

*Highlight:* "'No one knows why these diseases start in specific regions of the brain but we think it is influenced by the normal organization of brain networks,' said Bradford Dickerson, a behavioral neurologist at Massachusetts General Hospital and co-principal investigator in the LEADS trial. 'These circuits talk to one another. There is a shared vulnerability to these disease pathologies. These early onset dementias may be rare and are very frequently misdiagnosed or unrecognized.'"



### [Boston Suicide Prevention Hotline Experiences 'Increase In Demand' Due to Pandemic, Election](#)

CBS Boston | October 29, 2020

Experts, including **CLBB Faculty Member Dr. Gene Beresin**, discuss the impact both the pandemic and the election have had on mental health outcomes, especially in children and youth.

*Highlight:* "'Kids being more anxious, depressed, lonely, and worried than ever before,' said Dr. Gene Beresin, Director of the Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at Mass General Hospital. 'Dealing with the uncertainty, the worry, what I call anticipatory grief, about losses and more losses, are making them more depressed and anxious and stressed.' Dr. Beresin says kids are experiencing loss right now at a time 'for growth, separation, autonomy, and being on your own.'"



### [A Video Interview with Jordan Smoller, MD](#)

Mass General Neuroscience News | November 2020

MGN Co-Director Vijaya Ramesh, PhD, Professor of Neurology at HMS and Investigator at the Center for Genomic Medicine, speaks with **CLBB Faculty Member Jordan Smoller, MD**, Professor of Psychiatry at HMS, and Associate Chief for Research at MGH Psychiatry about his work applying precision medicine approaches to psychiatry, and his recently funded T32 project.



### [COVID-19 Deniers Are Still All Too Real. Here's How We Can Convince Them](#)

Fast Company | November 21, 2020

**CLBB Chief Scientific Officer Lisa Feldman Barrett** discusses the discrepancies between individuals' physical and social realities that are causing the ongoing phenomenon of "COVID-19 Deniers."

*Highlight:* "What happens when you have a social reality that is in direct opposition to physical reality? 'I'm not going to wear a mask because I'm an individual and I have rights. I can make my own decisions, and this is a plot by the government,' says Barrett. 'That's a social reality that's ignoring physical reality, in the sense that it doesn't matter if you believe a virus is a plot or not, because if the virus is there it's very real. All the virus cares about is you have a nice, wet set of lungs.'"

## In the News

### *General*

[Reforming the Process for Deep Brain Stimulation and Neurologic Device Approval in Rare Diseases](#) | JAMA Neurology | Nov 9, 2020

[Transforming Law Into a Science](#) | Harvard Law Today | Nov 10, 2020

[What Does a Guilty Brain Look Like?](#) | Scientific American | Nov 18, 2020

### *Trauma and Immigration Justice*

[Book Excerpt: How Living Near Border Walls Affects Mental Health](#) | Undark | Nov 13, 2020

['We Can Begin To Heal the Wounds.' Inside the Efforts to Provide Mental Health Care to Families Separated at the U.S. Border](#) | Time | Nov 25, 2020

[Our Immigration Policy Has Done Terrible Damage to Kids](#) | Scientific American | Dec 1, 2020

### *Elder Justice*

[Seniors Who Experience Financial Exploitation Show Brain Differences, Poorer Sight and Hearing](#) | Keck School of Medicine of USC | Nov 19, 2020

[A Need for Reauthorization of the Elder Justice Act](#) | The Hill | Dec 2, 2020

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