

# Advocating for Psychology in OHSU Pediatric Gastroenterology

Oregon Health & Science University's Pediatric Gastroenterology (Peds GI) Division is seeking to hire an additional psychologist onto their team in response to increased demand for services. The following project assesses the political landscape and structural elements of obtaining additional psychology FTE dedicated to the division and creates a framework to demonstrate value-added by hiring an additional psychologist. As psychologists are typically recruited through the Division of Psychology, it is vital to explore options that meet the needs of both the Peds GI clinic and the Division of Psychology. Stakeholder interviews revealed the Division of Psychology's decision to become more strategic in their recruitment of new psychologists, giving preference to those who wish to pursue teaching, research, and advocacy over clinical care. Findings additionally suggest that there may be competition among pediatric divisions to acquire behavioral health support and/or lack of funding to secure additional psychologists. Given these concerns, the Peds GI Division might consider several options to secure an additional psychologist. First, it will be crucial for the Peds GI Division to secure funding for the position via internal, clinic compensation and/or research grants. Second, it may be beneficial to allocate a certain percentage of FTE for this position to scholarly pursuits (teaching and research) or advocacy (outreach, program development), in addition to clinical care. Primary research shed light on the Division of Psychology's interest in pursuing research around chronic pain disorders and autism spectrum disorders as this is likely to benefit multiple pediatric clinics; therefore, this may increase buy in. Should these options be unavailable, it is suggested that Peds GI Division establish a long-term plan to hire an additional psychology fellow to meet patient demands while also supporting the Division of Psychology's vision to expand scholarly pursuits. Lastly, several recommendations are offered to help increase department effectiveness, including a) educating existing Peds GI medical providers on the difference between traditional therapy and behavioral health therapy and clarifying which referrals are most appropriate for the team psychologist, b) designing a brochure on behavioral health care including the structure, most common referral reasons, types of treatment offered, etc., and c) developing and implementing a patient skills group facilitated by the existing psychologist to expand access to care. Pediatric patients suffering from GI concerns are arguably the most underserved by community providers due to the highly specialized training necessary to treat this population. OHSU is well positioned to be a leader in comprehensive Peds GI services in the state of Oregon due to the inclusion of a multidisciplinary team, and the organization's focus on clinical care, research, and education, and an additional psychologist will help them achieve their vision.

## Team members

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