August 2020

Dear ABMR members,

I hope you are all well, ‘pandemic well’ that is (with all of its emotional and situational complexity and challenges). It was wonderful to see you during our first video ABMR meeting. The ease of a video meeting made this our largest meeting yet, with 125 attendees. Please feel free to revisit and share the video of the meeting which is on our website: https://academyofbmbr.org/2020-meeting

UPDATE ON 2021 MEETING IN SANTA CRUZ/1440. In case you have been wondering, as of now, we are still planning to meet in 1440 near Santa Cruz in June 2021, with our smaller group of 70, in a socially distanced way on their huge campus. 1440 in Scotts Valley is outside of the perimeter of the fires, thank goodness. It is, however, a tragic time here, as you may be experiencing or seeing on the news. We have had over 500 fires in California, three million acres have burned, lost redwood forests and lives, and displaced people and animals. The trauma level is high. Maybe California’s burning will serve as a beacon of light to those who do not see it, that climate change is here, that there are no boundaries in this one world. Right now some of us on other coasts are dealing with hurricane threats. Climate change mitigation, adaptation are critical issues for our discussions and work.

NEXT VIDEO ABMR MEETING: The feedback was strong that it was both wonderful to hear about ongoing pandemic studies and open the dialogue on racism, and that we should have another virtual ABMR meeting rather than wait until June. Our next meeting will continue with themes relevant to the COVID pandemic- “Biobehavioral mechanisms of infections: Understanding individual and group level risk, and the impact of social inequities” on Friday, January 22nd, 9am to 11am PST (12pm to 2pm EST). We will have data presentations and thematic group discussions. We encourage you to include potential ABMR members in our next online meeting.

Please send me an email (elissa.epel@ucsf.edu) if you are interested in presenting or making suggestions about format, and especially if you may have data on biobehavioral mechanisms of infections, our theme. As in your last email from Lori McBurney, Psychosomatic Medicine is currently accepting a few papers on biobehavioral issues for their Fall 2020 issue. Wijo Kop, who will be presenting at our Jan meeting, has offered to include a special section of a summer 2021 Psychosomatic Medicine issue on our meeting topic, including any work presented at the Jan 22 conference.
CALL FOR NEW MEMBERS! Our new member goal is to increase the number of engaged individuals who will attend and actively participate in our annual meeting, which serves as a catalyst for sharing, inspiring, and disseminating creative, high-impact behavioral medicine research, and to increase our diversity. So, during this year’s membership drive, we ask that you take some time to think about respected behavioral medicine colleagues who are not ABMR members but who have significant potential to affect the field through participation in our annual meeting and other ABMR initiatives. Think "impact" versus "numbers." In addition, please consider diverse potential members. The call for new members is attached, and nominations are due September 30th. If you have questions or are unsure about the fit or career stage, don’t hesitate to ask Mustafa al'Absi, malabsi@d.umn.edu, or Shari Waldstein Shari, waldstei@umbc.edu, who are co-chairs of our Membership Committee.

IMPROVING STRESS MEASUREMENT: Lastly, the NIA Stress Measurement Network is expanding its battery and seeks ABMR member’s involvement. The measurement toolbox is well used by the health field, with 40,000 visits to this site, and we want to keep it updated and useful, especially for new researchers or those from different fields. We have added a section on physiological correlates of stress, and welcome suggestions of other measures if you see gaps (https://www.stressmeasurement.org/physiological-measures). We would like to add broader measurement of racism beyond interpersonal racism (https://164f89be-6459-4649-bea5-b3d3fcc248ee.filesusr.com/ugd/890fda_03cb81878db441109bc0abfb65197f1d.pdf), as well as measures of political stress, and climate distress, to promote early use of innovative measures as well as widespread use of validated measures. Thank you to all who have already contributed as a writer or reviewer! Please send ideas for new entries, including new scales or people doing work in these areas, to elissa.epel@ucsf.edu.

Keep up your spirits, keep up the important work.

We look forward to seeing you all in January and hopefully sooner.

With warmest regards,

Elissa and ABMR Council Members