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Seattle Institute for Biomedical and Clinical Research
Spotlight Feature

DEBBY TSUANG, MD, MSC

Debby Tsuang, MD, MSc, is Director of the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC) at the VA Puget Sound and Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington. Over the past 20 years, her research has focused on the genetic and phenotypic characterization of neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders, including multidisciplinary efforts to improve our understanding of the biology, genetics, etiology, prevention, and treatment of schizophrenia, Lewy body dementias (LBDs), and Alzheimer's disease (AD).

Dr. Tsuang serves as the PI of a VA Merit Review ("Deep Sequencing in Schizophrenia") that seeks to identify rare genetic variants in schizophrenia using whole-genome sequencing and linkage analysis. This study is currently sequencing whole-genome in several families with multiple affected individuals with schizophrenia to identify disease-causing variants.

In her decades of work on clinicopathological correlation in LBD, she has observed that existing diagnostic procedures to distinguish LBD subtypes are imprecise and pose a challenge for timely clinical diagnoses. This resulted in multiple collaborations to identify biomarkers for LBD; she currently serves as the PI of a recently funded National Institute on Aging (NIA) study ("Whole Methylome Sequencing to Identify Unique Epigenetic Profiles in Lewy Body Dementias") that will perform whole-methylome sequencing in postmortem brain tissue to identify biomarkers that may serve as a good proxy for methylation alterations in the brain. She also serves as a Site PI on two additional studies that seek to identify LBD biomarkers. These studies will facilitate future clinical trials in LBD.

She also serves as both the Site PI of an NIA-funded project that explores the impact of genetic variants on late-onset AD risk and the Co-PI of an NIA-funded genome-wide association and sequencing studies that seeks to characterize the genetics of AD.

In her clinical work with geriatric patients at the GRECC clinic VA Puget Sound, Dr. Tsuang provides clinical expertise in the differential diagnosis of Veterans with memory impairment. The GRECC clinic provides in-person and telemedicine assessment throughout the VISN. Complementary to this work, as the PI of a GRECC Clinical Demonstration Project ("Automated Methods to Detect Undiagnosed Dementia"), Dr. Tsuang has used machine learning methods to query electronic medical records to identify a large number of Veterans with undiagnosed dementia.

Despite wearing multiple hats, one can often hear laughter echoing from Dr. Tsuang's office in the GRECC. Indeed, she treasures opportunities to find laughter and joy, both at work and at home with her family. She also enjoys traveling and eating.

SAVE THE DATE!

March 26, 2018 - Research Seminar Series
Alvin Matsumoto, MD
Building 1, Room 240 at Noon

May 31, 2018 – Annual Membership Meeting
Building 1, Room 240 at Noon

June 6, 2018 – Employee Appreciation
Building 1, Room 240 at 10 AM

Mark your calendars

IMPORTANT GRANT NEWS

All NIH FOAs are changing for January 2018. This is in conjunction with the NIH migrating to the new Forms E application package, which includes MAJOR HUMAN SUBJECTS CHANGES. Read more here. Contact your grants administrator to discuss 2018 submissions. Earlier is easier!