

Overview of The Menninger Clinic

Menninger is a nonprofit private psychiatric hospital located on a beautiful 50-acre campus just a few minutes south of Houston's Texas Medical Center. Founded in 1925 by the Menninger family in Topeka, Kansas, The Clinic embraces a biopsychosocial approach to mental illness and specializes in providing intensive, individualized treatment for individuals with complex and treatment-resistant illness.

The hospital relocated to Houston in 2003 to become affiliated with Baylor College of Medicine, one of the nation's top medical schools, and has carefully preserved its value of intensive, patient-centered care.

Menninger's commitment to excellence has frequently earned it a spot among the top 10 on the Best Hospitals List in Psychiatry from U.S. News & World Report.

The Fellowship

In joining the Clinic, trainees will be a part of a psychology tradition that has existed since the 1930s. The psychology postdoc will spend a full year working with adult patients in an inpatient and residential setting. The postdoc will:

- Provide individual psychotherapy and psychological assessments;
- Co-lead process and psychoeducational group psychotherapy; and
- Create and integrate diagnostic formulations into treatment planning.

Postdoctoral fellows will work with patients whose mental illnesses have taken a toll on their relationships with themselves and others. Lengths of stay in the programs can vary, generally between two and eight weeks. Postdocs may also work on other adult programs based on census needs.

Assessment and Consultation

Psychological testing remains highly valued at The Clinic, as there is an emphasis on using assessment to gain a deeper and more nuanced sense of the patients' personality and struggles, especially when the treatment team is unable to answer clinical questions through interviews, observation and standard clinical contact.

During the year, the postdoc will carry a caseload of two to three assessment cases at a time and may be trained to use self-report (i.e., MCMI-IV, MMPI-3, PID-5), performance-based (i.e., Rorschach, TAT, RISB-2), cognitive (e.g., WAIS-IV) and neuropsychological measures (e.g., RBANS).

The postdoc will share the results with patients, families and the treatment teams. Additionally, postdocs learn more about using collaborative assessment, a therapeutic approach to psychological testing that joins the patient and examiner as co-investigators in understanding the patient's dynamics and "stuck points" in treatment. Experience with test administration, interpretation and integrated report writing is essential.

Psychotherapy

The Menninger Clinic's strength is in its identity as a therapeutic hospital. Rather than focusing solely on crisis and stabilization, the treatment teams work together to understand complex, treatment-resistant elements of patients' struggles.

Menninger prides itself on its culture of therapeutic plurality; the theoretical orientation is integrative, valuing and assimilating psychodynamic (object relations, transference-focused psychotherapy), attachment (mentalization-based treatment) and second- and third-wave behavioral approaches (cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy) that access the patients' relational capacity as the primary mode of healing.

Individual therapy is a key component in patients' growth in Menninger's therapeutic milieu. As such, postdocs will hold a caseload of psychotherapy patients, meeting two times per week.

Access to Diverse Populations

Menninger specializes in treating complex and treatment-resistant mental illness; the majority of our patients have experienced multiple hospitalizations and/or failed treatments. Many of these individuals suffer from underlying or undiagnosed personality disorders along with depression, anxiety and substance use disorders, and we frequently work with other mood and psychotic spectrum disorders.

While most patients come from the United States, Menninger receives a fair number of patients who come from other countries. Some inpatient units serve a significant number of patients who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, as well as patients who may be questioning or exploring their sexuality and gender. Moreover, patients present with a broad range of religious/spiritual beliefs and affiliations. Providers integrate all aspects of patients' cultural identity and context into their understanding of the individual and how this informs both their core issues and treatment recommendations.

Research

The postdoc can become involved in ongoing research activities at the hospital. Menninger is home to an extensive repository of outcomes, psychological testing and biological (neuroimaging, genetics) data. Specific research opportunities include psychometric projects,

program evaluation, assessment of hospital-wide outcomes, examining biomarkers of mental illness, and the role of sleep in suicidality and hospital outcomes. Postdoctoral fellows will present either a research project using data or a topical seminar relevant to their clinical experience at the end of the year to an audience of Menninger staff.

Supervision

The theoretical orientations utilized at The Menninger Clinic are integrative and broadly and flexibly psychodynamic, with cognitive behavior therapy, family systems and other skills-building and evidenced-based treatment approaches represented.

Regardless of orientation, trainees typically receive assistance in the careful development of treatment formulations. Postdocs will receive at least two hours of individual supervision per week (testing and therapy supervision) by various members of the Psychology faculty.

Patricia Daza, PhD, ABPP, serves as the director of Clinical Training and director of Psychology at The Menninger Clinic.