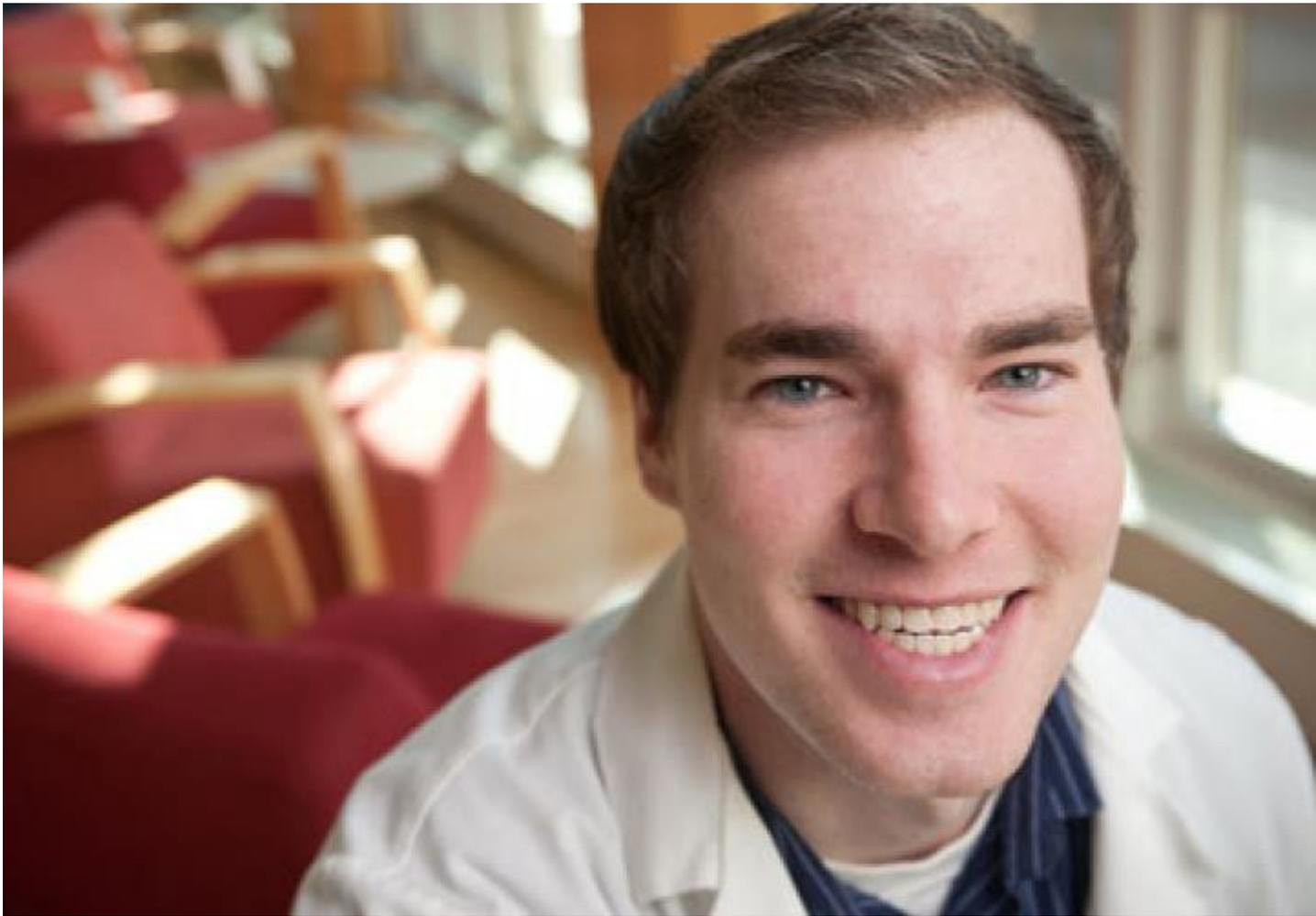


Remedy for Depression?

Thursday, March 7, 2013

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Timothy Warner, Ph.D. candidate in psychology

A psychology graduate student dedicates himself to finding answers.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression affects approximately 17.6 million Americans each year. Commonly prescribed medications for depression that are often advertised on television, while effective for some, do not provide the cure-all effect that many of us envision.

In fact, according to an article published in *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, fewer than 50 percent of depressed patients experience a complete recovery using current treatment methods. By the year 2020, the World Health Organization anticipates that depression will be the second most disabling condition in the world.

“It’s a staggering projection,” says Timothy Warner, a Ph.D. candidate who studies the implications of stress and depression with psychology Professor Robert Drugan. “That’s why people in our lab as well as other labs spanning the globe are attempting to make positive strides in extinguishing this epidemic.”

Specifically, Warner is currently studying a variety of depression called “anxious depression,” which as the name suggests, refers to the experience of simultaneously suffering from symptoms of both anxiety and depression. Warner shares that this particular combination “is correlated with difficulty in coping, a poorer rate of recovery, and more severe symptoms of depression.”

Although depression and anxiety disorders may appear to be one in the same, they are actually classified as separate disorders. Depression can be described as a person experiencing lethargy, despair, and a sense of hopelessness. On the other hand, an anxiety disorder (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder) is identified by fear, panic, and nagging worry. The confusion that often accompanies these disorders may stem from their treatments, as both are often remedied in the same way, with antidepressants and behavioral therapy.

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Since coming to UNH five years ago, Warner has published a variety of scientific papers. “Publishing a research article takes a lot of time,” says Warner. “We conducted as many as five experiments for one of our most recent papers.”

Warner conducts his research with animals specifically, rats. To produce stress and anxiety in the animals that will ultimately elicit signs of depression, Warner uses an experimentally controlled stress procedure that only causes mild discomfort toward the animals. This stress paradigm, which serves as an animal model of depression, can be

used to assess “various behavioral endpoints such as learning and memory as well as signs of anxiety and depression,” says Warner.

Warner is currently in the midst of finishing up his dissertation, which explores the topic of anxious depression previously described.

“I am particularly excited about Tim’s research findings. His preliminary work on his dissertation shows that our animal model of depression also causes changes in anxiety-related behavior. This will give our model greater traction and translation to the human condition,” says Drugan.

As for plans after graduate school, Warner hopes to continue his work in a postdoctoral position, and eventually acquire a tenure-track faculty position that will allow him to further pursue his passion for teaching and research.

Finding better options for depressed individuals resistant to current treatments is difficult. It takes many people who dedicate themselves to research careers such as the one on which Warner has embarked.

If you are interested in reading more about the work of Warner and Professor Drugan, check out their laboratory website. Here you will also find their latest scientific publications.

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