

A New Clinical Perspective on Neuroscience

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Dr. Lukasz Konopka describes his journey to Lake Forest College using one word: serendipitous. Immersed in the world of clinical neuroscience, the opportunity to teach a pharmacology class at Lake Forest College was just a thought brought up in conversation last year with the head of the Department of Neuroscience, Dr. Shubhik DebBurman. It wasn't until one year later that this idea turned into a concrete opportunity. Thus the course, Pharmacology: Drug, Brain, and Behavior, became a reality.

Dr. Konopka has always been interested in psychology. He received his masters degree in biological psychology from the University of Chicago and his doctorate in neuropharmacology from Loyola University. He pursued postdoctoral training from the University of Vermont, later returning back to Chicago to become a faculty member in Pharmacology and Psychiatry at Loyola University Medical Center. Dr. Konopka later became the Director of the Clinical Neuroscience Section at Hines VA and a Professor of Clinical Psychology and Neuroscience at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

During this period, Dr. Konopka focused on identifying biological markers of psychological disorders. He became "more of a clinician working with patients," fascinated by learning and teaching with respect to the clinical environment. Dr. Konopka studied the effects certain drugs have on patients by conducting neuroimaging studies, all the while teaching to clinicians in training.

Although most of Dr. Konopka's experience has been in the clinical setting, he has worked with both graduate and medical students in neurology and psychology. Dr. Konopka came to Lake Forest College with an open-mind, "not knowing what to expect." The transition to working with undergraduate students at Lake Forest College has been a "pleasant surprise" as the "students are forward and confident," showing a stark contrast to his past experience with graduate and medical students, who were hesitant to ask questions. Dr. Konopka admires that his students are "not afraid to ask questions," and in his class, "there is no such thing as a stupid question."

Dr. Konopka aims to use his knowledge and experience from working in a clinical setting to introduce the clinical side of science into his classroom, tying large biological themes together with behaviors and therapies. He strives to enable students to look at the bigger picture, beyond a textbook, by providing real examples from the clinical world. Suffice it to say, the Lake Forest College community is thrilled to welcome Dr. Konopka as a new addition to the Department of Neuroscience.



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