Dr. Jim Kantidakis from The Gut Center in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia was a Rome Visiting Scholar at Drossman Gastroenterology.

Jim Kantidakis, PsyD
Gi Clinical Psychologist & Hypnotherapist
May 12-15

For the few who do not know of Dr. Douglas Drossman’s work, his extensive research in Gastroenterology has paved the way to improved treatments and patient centred care.

He was one of the first gastroenterologists to develop the field of brain-gut interactions and Neurogastroenterology in terms of research, patient care and education.

Dr. Drossman has published over 350 peer review articles and over 140 book chapters, has edited or written 20 books and acquired over $15 million in grants.

His accolades and achievements significantly exceed the space available to this post.

A major contribution relates to Dr. Drossman being the organizing founder and President of the Rome Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of individuals with Disorders of Gut Brain Interactions (DGBI’s).

I was fortunate to spend time with Dr. Drossman as part of his mentoring program at Drossman Care, where I observed his consultations with his patients.

The first thing I noticed at that time was Dr. Drossman’s full engagement with his patients. He was directly facing his patients and was not distracted by taking notes or using his computer.

Everything Dr. Drossman did had a purpose—his words and actions were well considered and intentional. An example of this was when Dr. Drossman allowed a patient a moment to express her emotions before offering her a tissue. When I later asked about this delay in his offering a tissue, he replied he didn’t want to interrupt what she was feeling or convey that he wanted her to stop crying.

His level of engagement with his patients was focused and his assessment included the entire biopsychosocial history. There were times when I needed to remind myself, I was observing a gastroenterologist, not a psychiatrist. This is not all surprising when you look at his training and personal interests. His bookshelf reflected these interests with texts including the ‘Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders’ (DSM), and, ‘Psychological Development in Health and Disease’ by Dr. Drossman’s past mentor, Dr. George Engel.

Dr. Drossman also believes so strongly about the importance of the Doctor-Patient relationship, that he has developed an online training program to improve communication skills for medical professionals. I was fortunate to see and be guided through several videos that demonstrated a variety of different case scenarios, demonstrating both ineffective communication styles and their effective alternatives. I believe these videos can also benefit the more experienced practitioners.

Dr. Drossman is an outside-the-box thinker. His extensive knowledge in psychotropic medications or neuromodulators provides him with the unique opportunity to treat patients utilising the brain-gut connection. Dr. Drossman also highly values the importance of incorporating psychological interventions into patients’ care when appropriate and was actively involved in early clinical studies looking at the benefits of psychological interventions for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Drossman care as part of his mentor program and gained significantly more knowledge in being better able to help my patients. Thank you Dr. Drossman for the opportunity to observe and learn from you.

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