



Kalin Clark, PsyD, ABPP

Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Oregon Health and Science University, Portland, OR

March 26-27, 2024

At the encouragement of a mentor, I sought out the Rome Foundation/DrossmanCare Visiting Scholar Program to continue to develop in my role as a GI Psychologist. Prior to my experience I read various articles and watched videos describing Dr. Drossman's biopsychosocial approach to patient care. Observing this approach with patients in real time was invaluable. I found it particularly helpful seeing how Dr. Drossman not only listened with great empathy. He also explained to patients in detailed, yet easy to understand language about his diagnostic assessment and clinical recommendations. By the time patients arrive at Dr. Drossman's office, many have already seen multiple gastroenterologists and other types of healthcare providers with perceived limited progress.

In addition to gastroenterology, Dr. Drossman has a unique background in psychiatry. This combination of credentials clearly informs his treatment approach and relationship building with patients. I was impressed that he considers himself as a long-term healthcare provider to his patients, understanding that it is important to treat Disorders of Gut Brain Interactions (DGBI's) as a chronic condition that often necessitates ongoing care and assessment of the treatment plan.

During my two-day experience, I was able to observe a wide range of GI disorder presentations, including initial evaluations and follow up visits. I enjoyed discussing each patient with Dr. Drossman and his incredible PA, Elizabeth Smith, regarding case conceptualization and treatment planning.

I came away from this experience with ideas about how to improve discussing psychosocial factors and GI-specific issues with my own patients. Since I returned home from the program, I have been able to apply what I learned to fine-tune ways in which I describe the brain-gut connection with my patients, as well as provide educational materials to enhance their understanding of their GI condition. I also learned ways to further support my multidisciplinary team and provide education on patient-provider communication strategies.