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U. Houston Psychiatrist Puts Mental Health Into Perspective

By Karen Klucznic, U. Houston

(U-WIRE) HOUSTON—At one time or another, most people have experienced the sweaty palms and nervousness that accompanies test taking or being called on by the professor. For some, these feelings are easily dealt with. For others, the issues can escalate to the point that professional help is needed. Not to worry, Dr. Kenneth Arfa, chief psychiatrist at the Student Health Center, is here to help.

After receiving his medical degree from University of Texas-Southwestern Medical School in 1987, Arfa began expanding his general and forensic psychiatry practice to include mood disorders, specifically those dealing with eating and anxiety. Arfa joined the UH staff two years ago after serving as a psychiatric director and working for a managed health care organization.

“My staff and I provide a quality, inexpensive health option for students needing assistance as they pursue their education,” Arfa said. “We are here to help anyone, whether through counseling or medication control.”

While psychiatric counseling appointments tend to be extremely expensive, Arfa has kept in mind that most college students can't afford stupendous fees. He charges \$25 for a 45-minute to one-hour appointment and \$15 for a 30-minute appointment, significantly less than an outside psychiatrist.

For those students requiring medications, the Health Center has its own pharmacy and prescriptions are usually filled on the spot. Appointments are required and it is highly recommended to set one before a situation spirals out of control.

“During the fall and spring, we suggest for students to schedule four weeks in advance,” said Laura Moore, a psychiatric nurse. “During the summer semesters, only a two-week window is needed. Follow-up appointments typically only take one week.”

Depression and anxiety affects 19 million American adults annually, including college students, according to the National Mental Health Association. In some cases, students become so overwhelmed, sad, hopeless and depressed that they are unable to function.

“I encourage students to not be shy about coming in if they feel they need help. We see patients quite often who were told for years to get assistance,” Arfa said.

Arfa sees patients in his office, located at the Student Health Center, four days a week, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Wednesdays. If a student is in a crisis situation during closed hours, he or she is encouraged to contact the Counseling and Psychological Services center for help.