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Rittenhouse PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATES

Highlighting Philadelphia's Academic
Private Practice of Psychiatry
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Hearts and Minds

“People come to us for all different reasons,” he continues. “Every human is a work in progress, so the goal is never perfection. We’re here to help people who are open to working on themselves or need help with their struggles.”

While each patient is treated as an individual, the practice approaches each case with the same goal in mind: to help the patient overcome the issues that may be disrupting their lives or otherwise preventing them from realizing their full potential. Psychiatric conditions are treatable medical illnesses and, if improperly diagnosed or treated, can have a profoundly negative impact on someone’s ability to realize this potential. In most cases, appointments are available in person or virtually within two to three weeks of the initial outreach. Dr. Pagnani adds, “We’re an academically focused practice, without the academic institution wait.”

Dr. Pagnani founded the practice in Center City 11 years ago, and it has since expanded to a second office in Paoli. Although Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates treats many patients from southern New Jersey either virtually or at its Center City office, he expects to open a third office in South Jersey later this year.

“I’ve spent 11 years on faculty at The Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Medicine, but my focus

At **Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates**, Dr. Chris Pagnani has built a comprehensive team of 25 psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, and psychotherapists providing personalized, compassionate, and evidence-based care to patients struggling with their mental health.

by **BILL DONAHUE** photography by **JEFF ANDERSON**

Chris Pagnani, M.D., grew up in awe of his father, a urologic surgeon in South Jersey who made a profound difference in the lives of his patients. When it came time to choose his own path, he briefly considered business or economics as his college major before deciding to follow his father’s example and pursue a career in medicine. Unlike his father’s specialty, however, Dr. Pagnani opted to root his medical education in clinical psychiatry.

Today, as the founder and medical director of Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates, Dr. Pagnani leads a team of practitioners devoted to providing evidence-based and holistic psychiatric care for adults, adolescents, and children. The practice offers a range of mental health services, including medication management and psychotherapy, evaluations and second opinions for conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and ADHD, and neurodiversity evaluations for school accommodations.

“Nothing is more fascinating than the human mind,” Dr. Pagnani says. “I get to talk to patients about their lives and what drives them, and often they’re dealing with very personal issues. I enjoy spending time with patients and forming a plan to improve their quality of life or help them work on the things in their lives that they would like to change.



Chris Pagnani, M.D., founder and medical director of Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates



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is on outpatient psychiatric care at our private practice,” he says. “The practice has grown very quickly. I filled my caseload in the first year, and we have been adding one to two providers every year since. COVID-19 presented a lot of challenges for a lot of people, so we were able to increase in size by 50 percent during that period. It’s a shame that it has been such a struggle, but I’m glad that we’re here to help.”

The Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates staff consists of 25 academically oriented psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, and psychotherapists. Each came to the practice with impeccable credentials, having been educated and trained at some of the nation’s most respected institutions for psychiatric care. Many of their providers teach, or have taught, at those same institutions. While each provider has trained in general psychiatry, many have their own unique focuses, such as treating specific populations, including college students, people of color, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

“It’s important to feel comfortable with your provider,” Dr. Pagnani says. “The great thing about our website is that you can filter by provider and also read each provider’s bio. As a patient, you’re going to be sharing some very personal information, so it’s a benefit to have the option to pick which provider you feel most comfortable with, not just seeing someone who has been assigned to you.”

Dr. Pagnani has noticed an unfortunate trend in psychiatric care—namely, certain mental health providers and online companies prescribing medications to patients, including those that have high abuse potential, without investing the time needed to fully understand the patient and their difficulties.

“Online subscription plan one-size-fits-all mental health care, delivered from a provider in California, may not be in the patient’s best interest,” Dr. Pagnani says. That is why Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates spends 60 to 90 minutes with patients at their first visit, provides 20- to 30-minute follow-ups, and formulates an individualized and holistic plan for each patient. Practitioners collaborate with other providers (even outside of their practice) and frequently recommend family sessions.

“We’re taking the time to get to know you as an individual, and understand your personality, your life story and traumas, and any behaviors affecting your mental health,” Dr. Pagnani says. “Only then do we look into any illnesses that could be treated with medication management. We never assume that medication is required, until we’ve gone through the process of understanding the individual, and creating a holistic and thorough plan for their care.”

Dr. Pagnani suggests recent events from across the nation and around the world have spurred a pronounced uptick in the number of people struggling with anxiety, depression, and substance use. At the same time, he has been heartened by the renewed focus on self-care and the normalization of mental health treatment. He strongly advises those in need to seek help from a qualified provider. Furthermore, he states many insurance plans offer significant reimbursements for psychiatric care, even when care is delivered by an out-of-network provider with a fee-for-service practice such as his.

“A lot of people are having a tough time right now,” he says. “They’re struggling with all the divisiveness in the country, the aftermath of the pandemic, and the general stressors of life. If you’re struggling, please show yourself some compassion. Reach out to a professional. We’re here to help.” ■



Erica Liebman, Psy.D.



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About Dr. Chris Pagnani

Dr. Pagnani earned his undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University and then attended medical school at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.

He completed his psychiatric residency at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, where he served as chief resident during his final year of training. His training at Johns Hopkins included time spent in specialized inpatient units and outpatient clinics for mood disorders, anxiety, and addiction, among other conditions.

Dr. Pagnani has since become licensed to practice medicine in multiple states, and received board certification from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. In addition to his work as the medical director of Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates, Dr. Pagnani is an instructor at The Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Medicine and supervisor of psychiatric residents at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his spouse Whitney and their one-year-old son Remington.