Health Care’s Next Frontier:
The Race to Inner Space

Patrick Kennedy
Thursday, Sept. 21
10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Patrick J. Kennedy

Bestselling author, founder of two visionary nonprofit organizations, former Congressman, and corporate leader Patrick J. Kennedy has dedicated his life to improving the lives of people around the world who are experiencing mental illness, addiction and other brain diseases.

Despite eight terms in Congress passing landmark legislation and his post-Congressional leadership on public policy, one of Patrick’s greatest achievements was sharing his own narrative in The New York Times bestseller, “A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction.”

“A Common Struggle” provides a blueprint for transforming our nation’s mental health system so that Patrick’s four children — and their generation — do not have to suffer undiagnosed, untreated brain diseases, as did his parents’ generation.

During 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, serving Rhode Island’s First Congressional District, Patrick fought to end discrimination against mental illness, addiction and other brain diseases. He is best known as the lead sponsor of the groundbreaking Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, which he passed with bi-partisan support and was signed into law by President George W. Bush. The Parity Law provides tens of millions of Americans who were previously denied care with access to mental health treatment by requiring insurance companies to treat illnesses of the body, like cancer and heart disease, the same as diseases of the brain, such as clinical depression and opioid addiction. Beyond its powerful protections, the Parity Law also combats the shame surrounding mental illness and addiction.

In addition to the Parity Law, Kennedy authored and co-sponsored dozens of bills to increase the understanding and treatment of neurological and psychiatric disorders, including the Positive Aging Act, the Foundations for Learning Act, the National Neurotechnology Initiative Act, the Genomics and Personalized Medicine Act, the COMBAT PTSD Act, the Nurse-Family Partnership Act, the Alzheimer’s Treatment and Caregiver Support Act, and the Ready, Willing, and Able Act, which called on the Department of Homeland Security to deploy a civilian response system to blunt the psychological impact of terrorism.

Since leaving Congress in 2011 to develop a healthier lifestyle and start a family, Patrick has kept his promise to do everything in his power to fully enforce the Parity Law and to push for greater global investment in brain research, which he has called, “the next great frontier in medicine.” Toward this end, Kennedy founded two innovative nonprofit organizations that are
changing the lives of people with mental illness, addiction, and other brain diseases in the U.S. and around the world.

As the founder of The Kennedy Forum, Patrick drives the national dialogue about transforming the mental health system in America. The Forum, first organized to celebrate the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy’s signing of the landmark Community Mental Health Act, aims to revolutionize the way mental health care is delivered in America. Using his convening authority, Patrick brought together the best minds in the field to develop a strategic plan for moving the country forward and to unite the mental health community around a common set of principles, including fully implementing the 2008 Parity Law; bringing business leaders and government agencies together to eliminate issues of stigma; working with providers to guarantee equal access to care; ensuring that policymakers have the tools they need to craft better policy; and giving consumers a way to understand their rights.

As the co-founder of One Mind, Patrick helped spark a global revolution in how scientists collaborate to study, diagnose, and treat brain diseases. One Mind is pioneering a worldwide approach to open science that ensures scientific research, results, and data are available to researchers everywhere. Current initiatives are accelerating the discovery of better diagnostics, treatments and cures for post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. The next step will be to extend One Mind’s open science principles to increase the pace of cures and treatments for all brain diseases, including Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, ALS, addiction, and depression. One Mind’s unprecedented collaboration unites scientists, research universities, government agencies, industry, and philanthropists around the world.

Patrick further provides strategic guidance on mental health, intellectual disabilities, and public service as a current board member of Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, EMK Institute, In Search of Justice, International Bipolar Foundation, Joseph P Kennedy Jr. Foundation, and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

Through board appointments, Patrick also lends his expertise and personal experience to a variety of organizations committed to innovating care and service delivery for all people with mental health conditions and addictions. He works with Recovery Ways, a cutting-edge rehabilitation facility focused on dual-diagnosis addiction treatment; Clean Slate, which is committed to evidence based care for addiction and medication-assisted treatment; Innovatel, which is innovating in the telepsychiatry sector; Quartet, which is committed to the promise of collaborative care through its technology solutions; and AxialHealthcare which is committed to evidence-based pain management solutions. In recent years, Kennedy has been honored with humanitarian and other awards from the Mental Health Association, McLean Hospital, American Psychiatric Association, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, NAMI, New York Academy of Science, and other leaders in the mental health community.
Patrick’s most important achievement continues to be leveraging his powerful family legacy in the arenas of civil rights, mental health, and intellectual disabilities to advance the cause of social justice and human dignity for all people. He lives in New Jersey with his wife, Amy, and their four children.