



Promoting equity in engagement, access, and quality of mental health care for Veterans facing barriers to care, especially rural Veterans

May 2014 Vol 16, Issue 5

www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16

Communiqué

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RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Peer Support Services: Assessing the Evidence

Summary by Kathy L. Henderson, M.D.

An article by Matt Chinman, et al., in the April 2014 *Psychiatric Services*, Assessing the Evidence Base Series, is especially timely, as it reviews all of the current evidence available regarding whether peer support services are effective with individuals with serious mental illness. Over the last two years, VHA has been actively engaged in hiring over 800 peer specialists to meet requirements of both the Executive Order (August 31, 2012) and the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook. VISN 16 has hired 69



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Six Residents Selected for SC MIRECC Training Residents in Psychiatry Scholarship Program

In 2003, the SC MIRECC created the Training Residents in Psychiatry Scholarship (TRIPS) program with the aim of increasing the number of psychiatry residents entering postresidency research training fellowships in VISN 16. Intended to expose residents in psychiatry to research and academic careers, TRIPS represents a regional effort and collaboration among 10 VA medical centers and six schools of medicine in VISN 16. The TRIPS program also serves to increase the visibility of SC MIRECC, improve resident perception of VA and careers within VA, and to recognize residents with research interests and promise.

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peer specialists at medical centers and CBOCs to provide services in inpatient, residential, outpatient, and specialty mental health care programs. But how effective are peer specialists in providing these services?

This article reports the results of a literature review looking for all outcome studies of peer support services from 1995 through 2012. Peer support services were defined as direct service that is delivered by a person with a serious mental illness (schizophrenia, schizoaffective, or bipolar disorder) to a person with a serious mental illness or co-occurring mental and substance use disorder. They found 20 articles across three services types: peers added to traditional services (peers added), peers assuming a regular provider position (peers in existing roles), and peers delivering structured curricula. Authors judged the quality of the studies using three levels of evidence (high, moderate, and low).

Study highlights for clinicians:

- There was a moderate level of evidence (some adequate research to judge the service) for each type of peer support services.
- There was more evidence for support of peers added to traditional services and peers delivering curricula (e.g. WRAP [Wellness Recovery Action Plan] program)
- Effectiveness of peers in existing clinical roles was mixed
- There was only one study showing a worsening of patient outcomes with use of peer services

- Improvements have been shown in the following outcomes:

- Reduction in inpatient service use
- Improved relationships with providers
- Better engagement in care
- Higher levels of empowerment
- Higher levels of patient activation
- Higher levels of hopefulness for recovery

It is clear from the current evidence that peer specialists can play a valuable role in delivery of mental health services. For mental health systems that have limited resources, peers can engage patients in care and guide patients through a complicated system of care to help them receive needed services. Adding peers to clinical teams can make the teams more successful. We have already seen that in many clinical areas throughout VA. But future research should focus on greater specificity and rigor to strengthen the evidence, and determine what outcomes are the best indicators of impact.

This article can be accessed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=24549400>.

Citation

Chinman, M., George, P., Dougherty, R. H., Daniels, A. S., Ghose, S. S., Swift, A., & Delphin-Rittmon, M. E. (2014). Peer support services for individuals with serious mental illnesses: Assessing the evidence. *Psychiatric Services, 65*(4), 429-441. ♦

ATTRIBUTION: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MIRECC RESEARCH SUPPORT/EMPLOYMENT

SC MIRECC researchers and educators have a responsibility to ensure SC MIRECC receives proper credit for SC MIRECC-supported studies or projects in articles, presentations, interviews, and other professional activities in which the results of those projects are publicized or recognized. All investigators should credit SC MIRECC if they receive either direct or indirect SC MIRECC support. For example, "This work was supported in part by the VA South Central (VISN 16) Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center." If you receive salary support from SC MIRECC, you should list SC MIRECC as an affiliation.

CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Sponsored by the South Central MIRECC

VA mental health providers are invited to attend the next CBOC Mental Health Rounds session titled “**Keeping Up With the Aging Brain**” on Wednesday, May 14 at 8:00-9:00 a.m. CT and Thursday, May 15 at 11:00-12:00 p.m. CT. This Microsoft Lync session will be presented by Tamarra Crawford, Ph.D. and Kenya Davis, LCSW. At the conclusion of this educational program, learners will be able to:

1. Recognize areas of functioning that can be impacted by cognitive decline;
2. Identify chronic illnesses that can impact cognitive functioning;
3. Demonstrate basic understanding of mild cognitive impairment, dementia, and delirium; and,
4. Generate a flexible plan for case management when one suspects early stages of cognitive decline.

Call 1-800-767-1750 and use access code 26461# to participate. Email Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov or call (501) 257-1223 for registration and continuing education credit information.

Upcoming CBOC Mental Health Rounds
Second Wednesdays and Thursdays Monthly
8:00-9:00 am CT; (800) 767-1750; 26461#

June 11 & 12, 2014
The Challenge of Treating LGBT Veterans in Rural Settings

July 9 & 10, 2014
Chronic Pain

August 13 & 14, 2014
Veterans' Justice Program

Recognizing the Reserve Component: Needs, Access and Treatment Issues Facing National Guard and Reserve Members Training

This free training is available to VA mental health providers through the VA Talent Management System (www.va.tms.gov). Recorded during the November 2012 CBOC Mental Health Rounds, Dr. Harold Kudler teaches learners to identify three distinctions between the Reserve and Active Duty Components of the military; articulate two unique concerns of Reserve Component Members when they present for VA care; and describe three specific steps that VA providers can take to ensure there is “no wrong door” in their communities to recognize and respond to deployment-related health needs among Reserve Component Members and their families. Continuing education credit is available for physicians, psychologists, nurses and social workers. To access this training in TMS, visit https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=17674&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1372706760000. This training expires July 7, 2014. ♦

TRIPS (continued from page 1)

TRIPS awardees are post-graduate year 2 psychiatry residents selected by their department chair or residency training director from SC MIRECC academic affiliates in Little Rock, Arkansas; Houston, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Jackson, Mississippi; Shreveport, Louisiana; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Awardees are assigned a career mentor who assists them in career planning and keeps them up-to-date on active research projects relevant to their interests and opportunities for collaboration with SC MIRECC investigators. Awardees also receive \$1000 to attend a national meeting of their choice or pay for books or tuition.

New awardees participate in a didactic workshop led by two SC MIRECC investigators who are both research psychiatrists. Lectures cover a variety of topics, including an overview of SC MIRECC and its academic mission, an overview of the TRIPS program and mental health research priorities, the benefits of a research career, and successful pathways to a research or academic career. Congratulations to our new TRIPS awardees!

Crispa Aeschbach-Jachmann, M.D. is a second-year resident at the University of Texas Health Science Center. She is interested in addiction psychiatry.

Izabella Dutra de Abreu, M.D. is a second-year resident at the Baylor College of Medicine Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Dr. Dutra de Abreu got her start in research at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil. She hopes to extend the skills she developed while practicing in Brazil to a successful career in the U.S. Her research interests include dementia with an emphasis on Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment. Her long-term goals include completing a fellowship in geriatric psychiatry and conducting a clinical research project involving patients with mild cognitive impairment.



From left to right: Izabella Dutra de Abreu, Crispa Aeschbach-Jachmann, Cody Roi, Mark Kunik, Stan Mathis, Kevin Watson, and Veronique Haymon.

Through the TRIPS program, Dr. Dutra de Abreu hopes to write more articles and improve her research skills.

Veronique Haymon, M.D. is a second-year resident at Tulane. Dr. Haymon received her medical degree from LSU Medical School in New Orleans, Louisiana. Dr. Haymon's research interests include psychodynamics, talk-based therapies, mindfulness, and yoga. She recently completed a quality improvement project teaching yoga on an inpatient psychiatric unit. She plans to further this line of study by teaching yoga to Veterans.

Stan Mathis, M.D. is a second-year resident at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, where he also received his M.D. in 2012. Before going to medical school, Dr. Mathis majored in architecture at Yale University and practiced for several years in New York and Arkansas. His current research interests are in neuroaesthetics and affective neuroscience.

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Attention VA mental health providers!

Visit the VISN 16 Mental Health Practice, Research and Education Portal (MH PREP) to interact with other mental health providers about clinical care issues, access educational products and services, and discover the latest continuing education opportunities. The MH PREP is accessible from a VA computer at <https://vaww.visn16.portal.va.gov/SiteDirectory/mhp/default.aspx>. ♦

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Cody Roi, D.O., M.P.H. is a second-year resident at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. Dr. Roi's research interests include neurobiologic pathways for anxiety and stress disorders, applications for which psychopharmacology can be combined with talk and behavior therapy techniques to alleviate associated symptoms, as well as assessing and designing primary prevention programs for chronic mental health outcomes related to health disparities.

Kevin Watson, M.D. is a second-year resident at the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center. Dr. Watson is interested in geriatrics and addiction. Dr. Watson received his medical degree from the University of Oklahoma, where he also received a bachelor's degree in biochemistry and minored in Spanish. His research interests include hospice and palliative care and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) aging.

For more information about TRIPS, visit <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/trainingPrograms.asp> or contact Dr. Mark Kunik at MKunik@bcm.edu. ♦

FY2015 Clinical Educator Grants Call for Applications

Don't miss your chance to submit a proposal for the fiscal year 2015 SC MIRECC Clinical Educator Grants program. These small grants (up to \$10,000 for multi-site projects) are designed to help VISN 16 clinicians develop innovative clinical education tools that benefit the mental health care of rural and other under-served Veterans. The SC MIRECC is especially interested in funding projects that involve collaborations between medical centers and community-based clinics.

Examples of past projects include a CD-ROM compilation of pain management information and tools for clinicians who treat Veterans with substance abuse, a manual to conduct psychoeducational workshops for returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and their families about readjustment issues, and a DVD of ex-Prisoners of War telling their stories about internment and their struggle with PTSD symptoms and how they have managed to survive and thrive in their lives. The Clinical Educator Grants program has produced more than 30 excellent clinical education products that SC MIRECC makes available to clinicians free of charge. Products are available at <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/clinicalEducationProducts.asp>.

If you have a great idea for an educational tool to improve care delivery, this may be the opportunity that you are looking for! The deadline for submitting a proposal is August 8, 2014. For more information about the Clinical Educator Grants, contact Dr. Geri Adler at Geri.Adler@va.gov.

- Download Application at http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEG_Application.pdf.
- Download Example Application 1 at http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Sample_application_I.pdf.
- Download Example Application 2 at http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Sample_application_II.pdf. ♦

Published by the South Central MIRECC
Editor: Ashley McDaniel, M.A.
Reviewer: Carrie Edlund, M.S., M.A.

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