



Director's Update

In recent Updates I've discussed several exciting VISN 6 MIRECC initiatives related to our progress moving research into practice.

Another research-into-practice effort planned through our **Education Core** is to increase access to clinical training and education for rural community-based providers of mental health services to military service members and Veterans. To meet that goal for FY2017, we have partnered with the Duke University Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Partnership Program, headed by Dr. Marvin Swartz.

That program supports the Southern Regional AHEC, which provides clinician education to providers in and around the Fayetteville, North Carolina area that includes Ft. Bragg and nine rural counties. Most attendees are community providers serving military service members, Veterans, and families living in the area. MIRECC faculty will be providing webinars in the following areas:

- February 22, 2017: *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)*, Dr. Christi Ulmer
- March 22, 2017: *Neurosteroid Interventions*, Dr. Christine Marx
- April 22, 2017: *Family Needs and Interventions*, Dr. John Curry
- May 24, 2017: *Chronic Pain*, Dr. Jennifer Naylor
- June 28, 2017: *Bipolar Disorder Assessment*, Dr. Joshua Tiegreen

More information about how to sign up for these webinars will be disseminated soon.

John A. Fairbank, Ph.D.
Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC

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Outreach

“They Saved My Son’s Life”

VHA recently featured a **Coaching into Care** success story, as told by Julie, the young Marine’s mother.

Julie remembers, “*The incredible woman I worked with was Dr. Cindy Swinkels. She explained how vital the family connection was and to keep that communication going so that we could ease our way into helping my son. Without her, we would have been lost and in all probability my son would be dead.*” - See the full story at:

www.va.gov/HEALTH/NewsFeatures/2016/September/coaching_into_care_they_saved_my_sons_life.asp



Under Secretary for Health 2nd Annual Shark Tank Competition

The V6 Executive Team and Executive Leadership Council endorsed one of the “Promising Practices” submitted by MIRECC faculty as a “Gold Status Practice” giving it a heavier ranking in the National “Shark Tank” Competition. **Dr. Mira Brancu’s Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) Program for Rural Veterans** was selected as one of the 80 Semifinalists AND as one of the 20 Finalists!!!!

VISN 6 Announcements

The VISN 6 Retirement Specialty Center (RSC) has moved!

New address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
VISN 6 Retirement Specialty Center
Charlotte CBOC (CLT CBOC 600-VR)
8601 University East Drive
Charlotte, NC 28213

Contact information:

Toll Free Number 1-877-645-6015
Fax: (704) 597-3585 or (704) 597-3572
Email: VISN6RSC@va.gov or
VISN6-RetirementSpecialtyCenter@va.gov

National Service

Dr. Raj Morey (MIRECC Faculty & Neuroimaging Lab Director) recently completed four years of service on the VA RR&D Scientific Merit Review Board, Brain Injury: TBI and Stroke Subcommittee.

[Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 7, 8](#)

New Grants

PI: Karen Steinhauser

Cols: **Jason Nieuwsma** (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) & Heather King, *Developing and Validating a Spiritual Assessment Tool for Seriously-ill Veterans.*

Funded by: Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research and Development

[Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8](#)

Invited Lectures

Dr. Robin A. Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented *Windows to the Brain: The Neuropsychiatry of TBI* as part of the Grand Rounds co-sponsored by Citrus Health Network and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, Hialeah FL, September 14, 2016.

[Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8](#)

Dr. Jason Nieuwsma (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) presented the webinar *Enriching the Provision of Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy Practice with ACT*, in the VA’s ACT Mini Lecture Series in June.

Dr. Nieuwsma presented *Moral Injury: Looking beyond PTSD* as part of the Duke Southern Regional AHEC Grand Rounds at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center in July.

[Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8](#)

Welcome to our new MIRECC Fellows

Katherine Cunningham, PhD is the new Fellow at our Durham site. Katherine completed her PhD at the University of Tulsa and her pre-doctoral internship at the VA Maryland Healthcare System (Baltimore and Perry Point VAMCs). She has broad interests in empirically-based clinical care for Veterans and the role of cognition in the development, maintenance and recovery from PTSD. To date, her research has largely focused on the relationship between trauma-related shame and DSM-5 PTSD symptom presentation in Veterans and active-duty service members.



Mariah Delahanty, PharmD is a new Fellow at our Salisbury site. Mariah completed her BS in Biology at Emory University and her PharmD at Wingate University School of Pharmacy. She completed both a primary care pharmacy residency and psychiatric pharmacy residency at the Salisbury VA. Mariah's practice and research areas include posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and antipsychotics. She serves to support the didactic component of psychiatric rotations for medical, PA, and pharmacy students and residents by providing lectures on substance use disorders and monitoring parameters for psychotropic medications. She is looking forward to expanding her research to include suicide prevention and substance use disorders.



Erin D. Kurtz, PhD is the new Fellow at our Richmond site. She received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the Virginia Consortium Program in Clinical Psychology in Norfolk, VA and completed her doctoral internship at the VA St. Louis Health Care System. Erin's clinical training on internship included PTSD treatment with OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and Veterans with MST, general mental health, inpatient psychiatry, Primary Care Mental Health Integration, and psycho-oncology.

Her research background is in traumatic stress and resilience, post-deployment mental health, depression, and alcohol and substance use within a couples/family context. Her dissertation research examined PTSD risk and protective factors in female OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, using data from the VISN 6 MIRECC PDMH database. Erin looks forward to continuing research with the MIRECC PDMH study as well as furthering research interests in resilience, women Veterans, and PTSD treatment outcomes. In her free time, she enjoys reading, trying new restaurants with her husband, and exploring new parks with her dog.



Invited Lectures

Drs. Jason Nieuwsma (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) Heather King & Karen Steinhauser co-presented *Partnership between the Durham VA HSR&D COIN and VA Mental Health and Chaplaincy Program* at the Durham VA Health Services Research and Development Monthly Seminar in September. [Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8](#)

Drs. Treven Pickett (MIRECC Faculty, Richmond site) Christopher Murphy & Meghan Geiss co-presented *Military Culture and Deployment-Related Mental Health Affecting Veterans and Their Families* at Tidewater Community College on September 23, 2016. This 3.5 hour presentation was at the invitation of Give an Hour a nonprofit providing free mental health services to military members, Veterans, and their families.

[Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8](#)

Conferences



Sakpal R, Wilson D-M, Elnitsky C, Brearly TW, Taber KH. *Virtual Standardized Patient as a Training Tool for mild TBI Screening.*
Talk **Nominated for best paper!**



Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell WC, Meador KG. *Using systems redesign to integrate chaplaincy with mental health services.*
Workshop



124th Annual Convention
of the American
Psychological Association

August 4 - 7, 2016, Denver, CO

Park C (Chair) and Nieuwsma JA (Discussant). *Religiousness and military veterans – Impact, religious coping, spiritual struggle, and interventions.*
Symposium

Publications

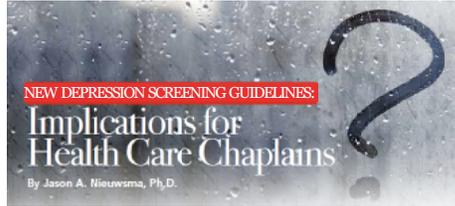
Books

Nieuwsma JA, Walser RD, Hayes SC (Eds.). (2016). *ACT for Clergy and Pastoral Counselors: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Bridge Psychological and Spiritual Care*. Oakland, CA: Context Press / New Harbinger Publications.

Book Chapters

Williams JW, Jr, Nieuwsma JA. (2016). *Screening for depression*. In TW Post, RH Fletcher, PP Roy-Byrne, HN Sokol (Eds.) UpToDate. Waltham, MA: Wolters Kluwer Health.

Magazine Articles



Nieuwsma,JA. *New depression screening guidelines: Implication for health care chaplains*. *Caring for the Human Spirit Magazine*. 2016; Spring/Summer: 33-35.

https://www.healthcarechaplains.org/docs/publications/caring_for_the_human_spirit_magazine/cfths_spring_summer_2016.pdf

Journal Articles

Christofferson DE, Hertzberg JS, Beckham JC, Dennis PA, Hamlett-Berry K. *Engagement and abstinence among users of a smoking cessation text message program for veterans*. *Addictive Behaviors*. 2016; 62:47-53.

Elbogen EB, Hamer RM, Swanson JW, Swartz MS. *A Randomized Clinical Trial of a Money Management Intervention for Veterans With Psychiatric Disabilities*. *Psychiatric Services*. 2016; 67(10):1142-1145

Hauser MA, Garrett ME, Liu Y, Dennis MF, Kimbrel NA, Veterans Affairs Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research Education And Clinical Center Workgroup, Beckham JC, Ashley-Koch AE. *Further evidence for a role of the ADRB2 gene in risk for posttraumatic stress disorder*. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*. 2017; 84: 59-61.

Kopacz MS, Nieuwsma JA, Jackson GL, Rhodes JE, Cantrell WC, Bates MJ, Meador KG. *Chaplains' engagement with suicidality among their service users: Findings from the VA/DoD Integrated Mental Health Strategy*. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. 2016; 46: 206-212.

Abstract: Chaplains play an important role in supporting the mental health of current and former military personnel; in this study, the engagement of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Army, Navy, and Air Force chaplains with suicidality among their service users were examined. An online survey was used to collect data from 440 VA and 1,723 Department of Defense (DoD) chaplains as part of the VA/DoD Integrated Mental Health Strategy. Differences were noted for demographics, work setting characteristics, encountering suicidality, and self-perceived preparation for dealing with suicidality. Compared to DoD chaplains, VA chaplains encounter more at-risk service users, yet feel less prepared for dealing with suicidality.

Mirzaalian H, Ning L, Savadjiev P, Pasternak O, Bouix S, Michailovich O, Grant G, Marx CE, Morey RA, Flashman LA, George MS, McAllister TW, Andaluz N, Shutter L, Coimbra R, Zafonte RD, Coleman MJ, Kubicki M, Westin CF, Stein MB, Shenton ME, Rathi Y.. *Inter-site and inter-scanner diffusion MRI data harmonization*. *Neuroimage*. 2016; 135: 311-323.

Naylor JC, Kilts JD, Strauss JL, Szabo ST, Dunn CE, Wagner HR, Hamer RM, Shampine LJ, Zanga JR, Department of Veterans Affairs Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center Workgroup, Marx CE . *An exploratory pilot investigation of neurosteroids and self-reported pain in female Iraq/Afghanistan-era Veterans*. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development*. 2016; 53(4): 499-510.

Risling MB, Dennis PA, Watkins LL, Calhoun PS, Dennis MF, Beckham JC, Hayano J, Ulmer CS. *Circadian Contrasts in Heart Rate Variability Associated With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in a Young Adult Cohort*. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 2016 Oct;29(5):415-421.

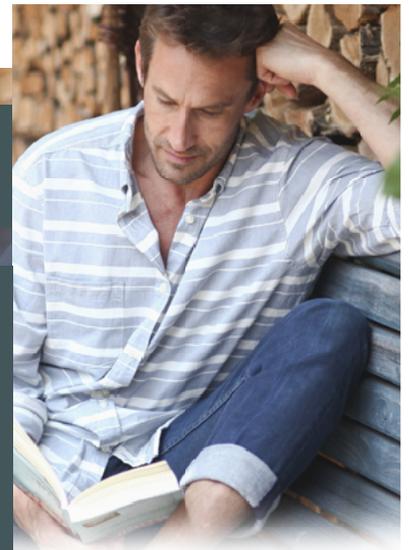
Servatius RJ, Marx CE, Sinha S, Avcu P, Kilts JD, Naylor JC, Pang KC. *Brain and Serum Androsterone Is Elevated in Response to Stress in Rats with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury*. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*. 2016;10:379.

Taber KH, Lindstrom CM, Hurley RA. *Neural Substrates of Antisocial Personality Disorder: Current State and Future Directions*. *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*. 2016 Fall; 28 (4): A4-261.

http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/self_help.asp

Resources to Empower Veterans Mental Health

Self-help materials can provide valuable education and support for Veterans who may be facing mental health challenges, their friends, and family members. There are a wide variety of self-help materials available and it can sometimes be difficult to select the most useful. VA has assembled a list of reviewer-recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the right option for you. For help in finding these materials, please click the "How to Use" tab.



Online Life Skills Training for Veterans

There are several free and anonymous on-line education and life coaching programs that use interactive exercises and video demonstrations to teach skills for overcoming life challenges. <http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/>

AIMS: Anger & Irritability Management Skills

This course offers a wide range of practical skills and tools to manage your anger and develop self-control over your thoughts and actions.

Moving Forward

An educational and life coaching program that teaches Problem Solving skills to help you better handle life's challenges

PTSD Coach Online

PTSD Coach Online is for trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress. It includes tools to help manage anxiety, anger, sleep problems and more.

Parenting for Service Members & Veterans

This course helps parents learn how to address both everyday parenting challenges as well as family issues unique to military families.

NC4VETS Resource Guide

This Resource Guide is produced and published by the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist and educate veterans in learning about state and federal veteran benefits. <http://www.nc4vets.com/blog/resource-guide>

Provider Education



CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Each CBOC MH Rounds presentation is now offered twice a month:

PTSD and Insomnia

Wednesday Dec 14 from 9-10 am ET & Thursday Dec 15 from 12-1 pm ET

Remember to register in TMS *in advance* to attend and receive credit.

January 11 & 12 *Posttraumatic Growth*
February 8 & 9 *TBD*
March 8 & 9 *TBD*

If you require assistance contact:

EES Program Manager - Tim.Walsh2@va.gov or
Education Tech - Jessica.Denno@va.gov



PACERS is pleased to announce a **new** "Dementia and Delirium" education module in our curriculum on cognitive disorders. **Each module is accredited for 1 hour of CE and is available to VA providers in the VA Talent Management System.**

Dementia and Delirium

TMS ID 29817

Dementia is a major public health concern, affecting over 5 million Americans, of whom over 560,000 are Veterans. The incidence of dementia increases with age, with more than 90% of those affected aged over 60 years. It is one of the most costly chronic conditions that the VA treats and its financial impact is expected to grow with the increasing number of aging Veterans. This course will describe two of the most common neurocognitive disorders that occur among elderly

Dementia and Driving

TMS ID 28776

One of the most challenging issues clinicians must address when working with Veterans with dementia is declines in driving skills. Approximately 30-45% of persons with dementia continue to drive, placing them at risk for becoming lost, crashing, and other adverse events. Clinicians have recognized a gap in knowledge regarding how to address diminished driving skills and decision-making for drivers with dementia. This training module will provide practical information that clinicians and health care teams can use in their work with older drivers with dementia and their families.



This workshop series was developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC). The web-based versions of the courses are all free at: <http://www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier>

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 - <i>Treating the Invisible Wounds of War (TTIWW)</i>
english & spanish editions | 5 - <i>TTIWW - Recognizing the Signs of mTBI during Routine Eye Examinations</i> |
| 2 - <i>TTIWW - A Primary Care Approach</i> | 6 - <i>TTIWW - Understanding Military Family Issues</i> |
| 3 - <i>TTIWW - Employee Assistance in the Civilian Workforce</i> | 7 - <i>TTIWW - Taking a Military History: Four Critical Questions</i> |
| 4 - <i>TTIWW - Issues of Women Returning from Combat</i> | |



Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals

<http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture>

Module 1: *Self-Assessment & Introduction to Military Ethos*

Module 3: *Stressors & Resources*

Module 2: *Military Organization & Roles*

Module 4: *Treatment, Resources & Tools*



www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6

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