



MIRECC Matters

VISN5 MIRECC: Putting Recovery Into Practice

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

APRIL, 2013

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Letter from the Director

Richard Goldberg, Ph.D.

The mission of the Mental Health Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (MH QUERI) is to improve the quality of care, outcomes, and health related quality of life for Veterans with mental health conditions by promoting research to close gaps in knowledge and implementing evidence based practices within the VHA. Since last fall, I have had the privilege of serving as co-chair of the Serious Mental Illness Health Workgroup within the MH QUERI and working with a dedicated group of investigators committed to promoting research to improve wellness and general medical treatment outcomes for Veterans with serious mental illness (SMI). Our workgroup recently helped cultivate 4 small locally initiated projects to help advance research in understudied priority areas that were subsequently awarded pilot funds by the MH QUERI Coordinating Center. Two of those awards went to VISN 5 MIRECC investigators.

The first, awarded to Dr. Melanie Bennett, is designed to identify the needs for and barriers to providing smoking cessation services on VA inpatient psychiatric units. The prevalence of smoking among individuals with SMI is two to three times that of the overall US population. SMI adults who are hospitalized have an even higher prevalence of smoking than those in outpatient settings. Inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, therefore, represents a critical window of opportunity in which to present and deliver smoking cessation services. However, to date there is nothing systematic provided to Veterans with SMI during an inpatient stay. Dr. Bennett's pilot represents an important first step in addressing this critical gap. Her study will survey both providers and Veterans about their interest in learning about/training to

Letter from the Director

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provide smoking cessation programming that could be implemented on VA inpatient psychiatric units. The study will also include qualitative interviews to help characterize the needs for and barriers to implementing and supporting smoking cessation treatments and services on inpatient settings.

The second, awarded to Dr. Elizabeth Klingaman, a first year postdoctoral fellow, will help gather critical information needed to identify the sleep service treatment gaps experienced by Veterans with SMI. Disordered sleeping is found in at least 75% of adults with SMI and is related to a wide range of negative outcomes. Addressing insomnia and other sleep disorders among Veterans with SMI is a crucial yet overlooked component of both prevention and wellness enhancement in this population. While there exist a wide range of treatment options to address sleep problems, including cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), one of the evidence based practice roll-outs within the VHA, there is a dearth of research addressing the fit of this treatment for SMI Veterans and limited information about the unique sleep treatment needs and preferences of Veterans with SMI. Dr. Klingaman's mixed methods pilot will help characterize the extent of sleep problems among Veterans with SMI and examine providers' views on how sleep problems affect SMI Veterans and their knowledge of, time to, and confidence in implementing sleep interventions with SMI Veterans. The study will also help characterize the experiences of SMI Veterans in speaking with their mental health providers about sleep issues and help determine Veterans' interest in learning strategies to manage sleep problems.

Together these two pilots fit squarely with our mission of putting recovery into practice and are well poised to help advance two important areas of research with potential to improve the health and wellness of SMI Veterans. Kudos to Drs. Bennett and Klingaman!

***MIRECC Matters* is also available online:**

www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/newsletter.asp

Three Terrific New Recovery-Fostering Small Grants Awarded

By Alicia Lucksted

Four times each year the VISN 5 MIRECC accepts applications to our Recovery-Fostering Small Grants Program from VA staff or VA-affiliated Veteran groups throughout the VISN. The purpose of this program is to support applicants' educational and clinical efforts to make VISN-5 VA mental health services more recovery oriented. In the Spring 2013 round of awards, we are funding three diverse and exciting projects from three different locations in the VISN:

Dr. Andy Santanello and colleagues at the Serving Returning Veterans Mental Health Program (SeRV-MH) will be offering certified mindfulness-based stress reduction and therapy groups to Veterans attending services at the SeRV-MH and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Clinical Team programs, both as an adjunct to other therapy and as a stand-alone recovery and wellness practice. Their award of approximately \$2,200 will be used to purchase supplies, meditation cushions, and yoga mats for use by Veterans immediately and in the coming years.

Ms. Eileen Tehan-Beachley and other staff and Veterans at the Martinsburg WV PRRC will be renovating and expanding a garden, lead by experienced gardeners in their midst. Their project will combine the satisfaction of planning and creating, meaningful activity, nutrition and food, practical skills, camaraderie, and the joy and responsibility of watching something grow that you nurtured. Their award of \$1,500 will be spent on equipment, supplies, bulbs, seeds, and plants that will support the garden into the future.

Ms. Heather Spangler, a social worker on the DC VA Inpatient Psychiatry unit 3DE will join with a Peer Specialist (TBD) to design and then deliver a recovery-focused group for Veterans finishing an inpatient treatment stay to help them move back into their daily lives, make the most out of the transition in terms of personal growth and connection to desired resources, and find support with each other. Their award of \$1,000 will support materials needed to develop the group curriculum, a student training companion project, and offer recovery-oriented resources to attending Veterans.

Congratulations to all awardees for your initiative and innovative ideas!

The MIRECC looks forward to supporting these efforts and others like them.

If *you* would like to apply for a VISN-5 MIRECC Recovery-fostering Small Grant please see the application packet at www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5 (look under "Quick Links" on the right) or contact Alicia at Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov or 410-706-3244.

Meet a Member of the MIRECC Veterans' Advisory Panel

Interview by Alicia Lucksted

The Veterans' Advisory Panel

The VISN 5 MIRECC has a Veteran Advisors Panel (VAP). Advisors are volunteer Veterans who meet monthly to hear about current VISN-5 MIRECC research, educational, and clinical projects and to contribute their perspectives, opinions and suggestions as Veterans. Here we highlight a Veteran who is a member of the VAP and have asked him to tell a bit about his background, his experience with the VAP, and his process of mental health recovery.

VAP Member David Tesheira

David Tesheira has volunteered as an Advisor for the MIRECC's Veteran Advisors Panel (VAP) since May of 2011, bringing a wealth of perspectives: He is a service-connected Veteran and was a single parent during his entire Service. He is originally from the Caribbean where he worked in law enforcement and taught high school human biology for two years. He is now married with an 8 year old daughter, an older daughter in college, and a son serving in the Air Force. Professionally, David is a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist at the Baltimore VA, helping a wide range of veterans with Axis I mental health diagnoses reach their employment goals. David is passionate about helping Veterans overcome obstacles and doubts. In each step of the vocational rehab process he focuses on listening deeply and talking honestly about each Veteran's problems, strengths, preferences, goals, and obstacles – helping him/her craft a personalized plan to progress and success. Having served 8 years in the U.S. Army, he often shares his own struggles and recovery as a way of connecting and offering examples and strategies. He said he finds his work very rewarding, and also personally therapeutic, citing opportunities to give back, to share his experiences, and to gain inspiration and ideas from other Veterans and his coworkers.

"I very much value talking with and learning from the other Veterans too, both to advance our knowledge and to exchange practical ideas."
— David Tesheira

About the VAP

David said he volunteered for the VAP because he saw an opportunity to contribute to areas that can benefit Veterans going through difficulties similar to his own. He called his experience on the VAP "excellent" saying, "I get first-hand information on research, VA developments, and various programs. We talk to the doctors and staff who are working to improve things and we get to be part of the solution by giving ideas, advice, and first-hand information. It has exposed me to a wider view of the functioning of the VA, thru the

VAP Member Interview

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MIRECC. " He continued, "I very much value talking with and learning from the other Veterans too, both to advance our knowledge and to exchange practical ideas. I take a lot of information from the VAP meetings back to my colleagues and the Veterans I work with." David also enriches the VAP meetings by bringing in ideas from the Veterans with whom he works, and has recruited several new VAP volunteers.

About Mental Health and Recovery

David described self-regard and motivation as critical ingredients in Recovery for Veterans. He found that both often take a beating and some Veterans lose confidence in their ability to help themselves. He described supported employment as helping Veterans gain confidence and motivation in very personalized ways, so that if "one thing is not working you can shift, reconsider, and try again" to get to one's goals. He emphasized the crucial role of being able to "fall, get up, brush off, adjust your approach, and try again" to overcoming obstacles. He sums this up for himself and other Veterans with the phrase "Persistent Consistency", and often quotes the saying "The thing to try when all else fails is again." (author unknown)

David has also observed that Veterans' recovery is greatly helped by "having people around them who give them love, attention and the care they need, who understand what they are going through, and give them a chance to pursue their dreams no matter where they are now starting from. "

Therefore, one of the biggest needs he sees in mental health is education and support for families. "I hear of many Veterans' loved ones, especially spouses and kids, who have no way to understand what the Veteran is going through. They get angry and hurt, don't understand what is happening. A lot of times the Veteran does not understand what is happening either. How can the VA really help them? One thing is that family can have vicarious trauma or direct trauma from their experiences with the Veteran. They should be able to get services here at the VA for that. "My own recovery was nudged along by my eight year old daughter, " David adds. "One day picking her up from school she just asked me 'Were you always like this?' I would sometimes snap at people but would quickly get myself under control, and thought I was handling it well. Her question made me realize two things... one was that I needed to get more help managing my experiences; I was not doing as well as I thought. I also realized why the very first thing she asked me every day when I picked her up from school was how was my day. And if I just said 'fine' she'd ask more. She was trying to gauge my mood, if I was having a 'good day' or a 'bad day'. I had never realized this! It is a lot for a young child to worry about. Together these realizations made me seek more help, and I try to pass on what I have gained to other Veterans."

Meet the MIRECC Fellow

AN INTERVIEW WITH Beth Klingaman, Ph.D.

Dr. Beth Klingaman joined the MIRECC as a postdoctoral fellow in September, 2012. Beth received her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park, and completed her clinical internship training at the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System in Denver, Colorado. She has worked on research projects in a number of areas including social anxiety/body image, health disparities, and ways to extend and evaluate dementia care.

1) Tell us about your area of research.

My research interests include self-efficacy, shared decision making, and behavioral health interventions with individuals who have serious mental illness, particularly women and ethnic minorities. During my time at the MIRECC, I am planning to investigate Veterans' perceptions of how sleep problems affect their quality of life and recovery, as well as providers' use, knowledge, confidence, and perceived training needs in implementing sleep interventions with Veterans who have SMI. I also aim to become involved in investigations of cognitive functioning and neurocognitive effects of health behaviors (e.g., improved sleep, regular aerobic exercise) among individuals with SMI. I am also interested in the impacts of internalized stigma on mental illness recovery.

2) What studies/programs of research are you currently working on?

My research thus far has examined barriers and facilitators to engagement in physical activity, particularly among women, as well as

the identity development processes of underserved populations that experience mental and physical health disparities. My research activities at the MIRECC currently include work with Drs. Richard Goldberg, Melanie Bennett, and Julie Kreyenbuhl on factors that promote self-efficacy, shared decision making, and optimal patient-provider communication around health behavior activation and maintenance among Veterans with serious mental illness (SMI). Finally, I am working with Drs. Amy Drapalski and Alicia Lucksted to elucidate the various dimensions of self-stigma among Veterans with SMI.

3) What are the potential benefits of your program of research for Veterans?

Individuals with SMI have a significantly higher mortality rate than do individuals without SMI. My research program aims to develop clinical interventions that specifically target the factors known to underlie poor health behaviors among people with SMI: deficits in the skills necessary for communicating needs/wishes to healthcare providers and motivational/cognitive factors that inhibit healthy behaviors (e.g., exercise, nutrition, smoking cessation, and sleep). It is hoped that clinical interventions that are better tuned to the specific needs of men and women with SMI will help to empower these individuals to take a more active role in their healthcare decisions and to ultimately improve their long-term well-being, physical health, cognitive functioning, and quality of life.

4) How can people get in touch with you if they have questions about your work?

I can be reached in my office in the MIRECC suite in the VA Annex at 410-637-1850 or e-mail me at Elizabeth.Klingaman@va.gov.

Upcoming Educational Activities at the MIRECC



REMINDER: The VISN 5 MIRECC is Hosting Two Conferences

The first conference is scheduled for **May 14, 2013** at the VA in Baltimore and is titled "Homeless Veterans with Serious Mental Illness: From Street to Independence." The keynote speaker will be Amy Kilbourne, Ph.D., who will speak about "Population-based strategies to reduce the risk of homelessness and mortality among Veterans with SMI." Vince Kane, MSW, the Director of the VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans, will also be a presenter. The second conference, scheduled for **June 4, 2013** in Baltimore, titled "Issues of Aging in Veterans with Serious Mental Illness." The keynote speaker will be Peter Rabins, M.D., who will speak on "Preparing for the mental health of older Veterans in the next ten years." Bradley Karlin, Ph.D., the National Mental Health Director for Psychotherapy and Psychogeriatrics at VA Central Office will also be a presenter. VA staff and Veterans are encouraged to attend!

Interested Veterans may call Cindy Clark for assistance at 410-637-1861.

For registration information or other questions, contact Rebecca Wald at rwald@psych.umaryland.edu.

MIRECC MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY RESOURCE TABLE

We are excited about beginning enhanced outreach efforts to Veterans. To kick off this effort, the MIRECC hosted a Recovery Resource Table on the 2nd Floor of the Baltimore VA Medical Center on April 26th. The table had VA mental health resources for Veterans and family members. Veterans learned of research innovations at the MIRECC, how our efforts can positively impact them, and opportunities for them to get involved. We anticipate continuing this effort to provide news on recovery innovations and resources. Look for us at a location near you!

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH!

To celebrate, there will be educational activities at the Baltimore and Perry Point VA Medical Centers that bring attention to mental health issues. In Baltimore, tables will be set up on the 2nd floor balcony with content and resources representing peer support work, substance use disorders, trauma, the Veterans' Mental Health Council, and family programs. The MIRECC will offer the Virtual Voices' Workshops to interested VA staff. There will also be a Mental Health Fair at the Perry Point VA gym on May 20th from 10am -2pm. Workshops focusing on issues of recovery, including "In Our Own Voice" from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and "Stigma" from On Our Own will be presented.

Recent MIRECC Publications

[VISN 5 MIRECC staff are listed in **bold**]

- Cohen, A. N., **Drapalski, A. L.**, Glynn, S. M., **Medoff, D.**, Fang, L., & **Dixon, L. B.** (2013). Preferences for family involvement in care by consumers with serious mental illness. *Psychiatric Services, 64*, 259-263.
- Day, H.R., Perencevich, E.N., Harris, A.H., Gruber-Baldini, A.L., **Himelhoch, S. S.**, **Brown, C. H.**, & Morgan, D.J. (2013). Depression, anxiety and moods of hospitalized patients under contact precautions. *Infection Control Hospital Epidemiology, 33*(3), 251-258.
- Drapalski, A. L.**, **Lucksted, A. A.**, Perrin, P., **Aakre, J. M.**, **Brown, C. H.**, DeForge, B., & Boyd, J. (2013). A model of internalized stigma and its effects on people with mental illness. *Psychiatric Services, 64*, 264-269.
- Goldberg, R. W.**, Dickerson, F., **Lucksted, A. A.**, **Brown, C. H.**, Weber, E., Tenhula, W.N., **Kreyenbuhl, J. A.**, & **Dixon, L. B.** (2013). Living Well: An intervention to improve self-management of medical illness for individuals with serious mental illness. *Psychiatric Services, 64*, 51-57.
- Keefe RS, **Buchanan RW**, Marder SR, **Schooler NR**, Dugar A, Zivkov M, Stewart M. Clinical trials of potential cognitive-enhancing drugs in schizophrenia: What have we learned so far? *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 39(2):417-425, 2013. PMID: PMC3576170
- Lee MR, Wehring HJ, McMahon RP, Linthicum J, Cascella N, Liu F, **Bellack A**, **Buchanan RW**, Strauss GP, Contoreggi C, Kelly DL. Effects of adjunctive intranasal oxytocin on olfactory identification and clinical symptoms in schizophrenia: Results from a randomized double blind placebo controlled pilot study. *Schizophrenia Research* 145(1-3):110-115, 2013. PMID: 23415472
- Lindsey, M., Chamber, K., Pohle, C., Bealle, P., & **Lucksted, A. A.** (2013). Understanding the Behavioral Determinants of Mental Health Service Use by Urban, Under-Resourced Black Youth: Adolescent and Care-giver Perspectives. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 107-121.
- Lucksted, A. A.**, **Medoff, D.**, Burland, J., Fang, L.J., **Brown, C. H.**, Jones, A., Lehman, A., & **Dixon, L. B.** (2013). Sustained outcomes of a peer-taught family education program on mental illness. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 127*, 279-286.
- Jarskog LF, Dong Z, Kangarlu A, Colibazzi T, Girgis RR, Kegeles LS, Barch DM, **Buchanan RW**, Csernansky JG, Goff DC, Harms MP, Javitt DC, Keefe RS, McEvoy JP, McMahon RP, Marder SR, Peterson BS, Lieberman JA. Effects of davunetide on n-acetylaspartate and choline in dorsolateral prefrontal cortex in patients with schizophrenia. *Neuropsychopharmacology*. 2013 Jan 16. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 23325325
- Park., S.G., **Bennett, M. E.**, Couture, S.M., & Blanchard, J.J. (2013). Internalized stigma in schizophrenia: Relations with dysfunctional attitudes, symptoms, and quality of life. *Psychiatry Research, 205*(1), 43-47.
- Slade, E. P.**, Rosenberg, S., **Dixon, L. B.**, **Goldberg, R. W.**, Wolford, G.L., **Himelhoch, S. S.**, & **Tapscott, S.** (2013). Costs of a public health model to increase receipt of hepatitis-related services for persons with mental illness. *Psychiatric Services, 64*(2), 127-133.
- Strauss GP, Horan WP, Kirkpatrick B, Fischer BA, Keller WR, Miski P, **Buchanan RW**, Green MF, Carpenter WT Jr. Deconstructing negative symptoms of schizophrenia: Avolition-apathy and diminished expression clusters predict clinical presentation and functional outcome. *Journal of Psychiatry Research*, 2013 Feb 27. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 23453820
- Valenstein M, McCarthy JF, Ganoczy D, Bowersox N, Dixon L, Miller R, Visnic S, **Slade E**, Assertive community treatment in Veterans Affairs settings: Impact on adherence to antipsychotic medication, *Psychiatric Services*, February 15, 2013; doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.201100543
- Wilson, C.S., **Bennett, M. E.**, & **Bellack, A. S.** (2013). Impact of family history in persons with dual diagnosis. *Journal of Dual Diagnosis, 9*(1), 30-38.

Comings and Goings

We have two new people to welcome to the MIRECC! Elana Schwartz, MA has joined the MIRECC as a research assistant and will be working as a recruiter and interviewer on MIRECC projects related to health improvement and mental health recovery. Elana received her BA from the University of Maryland, College Park and her MA from Towson University, and she most recently worked as a research assistant at the University of Maryland School of Medicine Division of Services Research. She comes to the MIRECC with experience in research assessment and coordination. Erica Travares, BA has joined the MIRECC and will be a research assessor on studies running at both the Baltimore and Washington DC VAMCs. She received her BA in Human Development from Boston College and most recently worked as a research coordinator at the Center for Women's Mental Health at Massachusetts General Hospital. Welcome to you both!

We also have several people leaving the MIRECC. Josh Clark, MA has been with the MIRECC for the past year as a research assistant working at the Washington DC VA. He was a recruiter, assessor, and therapist of a study of smoking cessation for Veterans with serious mental illness, and also worked on a study of the development of an assessment tool to measure mental health recovery. Josh is leaving the MIRECC to complete his pre-doctoral clinical internship at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. In addition, Audrina Mullane, MA is leaving to complete her pre-doctoral clinical internship at the VA Maryland Health Care/University of Maryland Psychology Internship Consortium at the Baltimore VAMC. Audrina worked as a recruiter and assessor on several studies of MIRECC investigators run through our affiliate institution (University of Maryland Baltimore) related to self stigma and mental health recovery.

Good luck to you both!

Upcoming Conferences and Events

MIRECC SCIENCE MEETINGS

The MIRECC organizes a series of meetings at which invited speakers and local researchers present research findings, discuss other projects they are working on to get input from peers, or discuss other research-related issues. These meetings occur twice per month and are held in the MIRECC conference room (7th Floor Baltimore Annex). Dates, speakers, and topics for the spring are listed below. Please contact Melanie Bennett (Melanie.Bennett@va.gov) for more information.

- May 28, 12 pm: Dr. Richard Macko, Exercise and Serious Mental Illness
- May 13, 3 pm: Dr. Matt Chinman: Peer Providers in Mental Health
- May 15, 12 pm: Dr. Amy Kilbourne: Mental Health QUERI
- June 3, 3 pm: Dr. Stephen Bartels: Community Living for Older Adults with SMI

RECOVERY-ORIENTED SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Application Deadlines for 2012: 1st of March, June, September, & December
Small Grant Amount: \$300-\$5000

The VISN 5 MIRECC offers a small grant mechanism to fund recovery-oriented clinical and educational innovations in response to the VA's Action Agenda to transform VA mental health services to a recovery model. This program especially encourages (but is not limited to) proposals such as: creating, adopting, launching or expanding recovery-oriented clinical or self-help projects; new programs to educate staff, Veterans, and/or family members of Veterans about mental health recovery models; or specific recovery-oriented services/programs. For more information or to receive an application, please contact:

Alicia Lucksted, Ph.D., MIRECC Recovery Coordinator
www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5, 410-706-3244, Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov

MONTHLY CONSULTATION SEMINAR Psychopharmacology Case Conference

First Thursday of every month

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Call 1-800-767-1750, code 79846

All VISN Clinicians are invited to attend this conference and to bring questions about a difficult or challenging psychopharmacology case. Note that the topic of the conference has been expanded from a focus only on metabolic side effects of antipsychotic medications to include all areas of psychopharmacology. The MIRECC Case Conference facilitators are Robert Buchanan, M.D., MIRECC investigator and Professor of Psychiatry at the UMB School of Medicine; Julie Kreyenbuhl, PharmD, Ph.D., MIRECC investigator and Associate Professor in the UMB Department of Psychiatry; and Neil Sandson, M.D., inpatient attending psychiatrist in the VAMHCS and MIRECC staff member.

Upcoming Conferences and Events

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VA Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness

Since 2008, the VA Social Skills Training (VA-SST) program has been training VA clinicians nationwide in the delivery of SST for Veterans with serious mental illness.

To date, the program has trained over 500 VA mental health clinicians in the delivery of SST. We have also trained a total of 25 Master Trainers as experts in SST, covering 16 out of the 21 VISNs.

Upcoming workshops are scheduled for:

**August 13-14—Baltimore (VISN Targets: 1-12)
September 19-20—Los Angeles (VISN targets: 15-23)**

For more information on Social Skills Training and the VA-SST Training program, we encourage you to visit our website:

http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/social_skills.asp

Matthew Wiley, MPH, VA Social Skills Training Program Coordinator: Matthew.Wiley@va.gov

The VISN 5 MIRECC Seeks Veterans Interested in Mental Health Issues to Join Our Veterans Advisory Panel

Advisors are volunteer Veterans who meet once a month to hear about current VISN-5 MIRECC research, educational, and clinical projects and to contribute their perspectives, opinions and suggestions as Veterans.

All interested Veterans are encouraged to join!

Be part of the discussion.

Help shape MIRECC work in the VA.

Meet other Veterans with common interests.

Good on your resume, too.

To become a MIRECC Veterans Advisory Panel (VAP) advisor, or for more information, please contact:

Alicia Lucksted, at 410-706-3244 or Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov

The MIRECC Veterans Advisory Panel is not connected to a research study.

It is an ongoing group of volunteer advisors who help the MIRECC further improve its work.





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Medical Media, VA Maryland Health Care System
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MIRECC MATTERS

An electronic publication of the
VA Capitol Health Care Network (VISN 5)
Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC)

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