

MIRECC Matters

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Veterans attend Wellness Recovery Action Planning Workshop

Sam Korobkin, Ph.D., and Richard Goldberg, Ph.D.

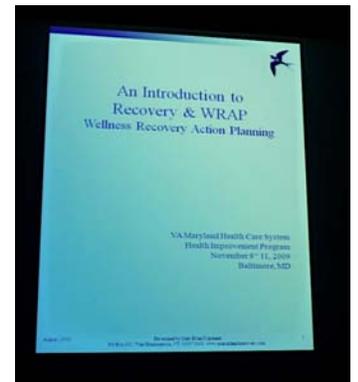
On November 9 through November 11 (Veteran's Day), 2009, approximately 50 Veterans attended a 3-day seminar entitled "Introduction to Mental Health Recovery and Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP)". This seminar was organized and co-facilitated by VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) psychologist Dr. Sam Korobkin. Debbie Anderson, of the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery, a peer-run recovery organization, served as Dr. Korobkin's co-facilitator. WRAP is a powerful and effective system for the self-management of psychiatric symptoms. Developed by Mary Ellen Copeland, Ph.D., as a means to recover from her own struggles with severe psychiatric symptoms,

WRAP is now lauded by SAMHSA as "an exemplary practice" in efforts towards forwarding one's mental health recovery.

Dr. Korobkin was first introduced to WRAP by attending a VISN 5 MIRECC sponsored webinar on WRAP presented by Dr. Copeland. Dr. Korobkin was then inspired to apply for the VISN 5 MIRECC Small



WRAP co-facilitators, Sam Korobkin, Ph.D., (left) and Debbie Anderson (right), share laughs at the start of the WRAP workshop.



Grants Program for Recovery-Fostering Educational and Clinical Innovations to fund specialized training for himself in WRAP Facilitation. Dr. Korobkin then brought back this training to the VAMHCS where he presented several in-service lectures on WRAP for staff and began conducting successful ongoing WRAP workshops for Veterans at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. Additional WRAP-related MIRECC Small Grants awarded to Dr. Korobkin have earned him the status of being one of only two clinicians in the VA

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Have Recruitment Needs? An Opportunity for Investigators

Robert Buchanan, M.D.

One of the challenges to investigators conducting research on clinical problems is to insure the generalizability of their studies. A key requirement for generalizability is to conduct research on representative patients receiving services in VA and community agencies. Partnerships between researchers and community clinical programs are often difficult to establish. Consequently, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has established a special funding opportunity to promote and support these partnerships: the Interventions and Practice Research Infrastructure Program (IP-RISP). MIRECC and University of Maryland scientists were recently awarded a 5-year RISP (P.I.: Robert Buchanan) that established a recruitment resource network called the Core Service Agency - Practice Research Network (CSA-PRN).

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Carrie Gillen (left) from Employee Education registers Sophia Autrey (right) at the WRAP workshop.

WRAP

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system nationally with Advanced Certification in WRAP Facilitation. With this achievement, Dr. Korobkin is now certified to "train the trainer" in WRAP facilitation.

The recent 3-day WRAP workshop held in Baltimore will serve as the prerequisite course for Veterans wishing to further their knowledge of WRAP and perhaps even facilitate WRAP workshops for themselves in the near future.

A follow-up WRAP Facilitator Training for graduates of this workshop is tentatively scheduled for February 2010. For more information about WRAP services within the VAMHCS, call Dr. Korobkin at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, (410) 605-7000 x5220.

The VISN 5 MIRECC has also been working with Dr. Korobkin to collect preliminary evaluation data regarding his VA-based WRAP training efforts. Specifically, Dr. Richard Goldberg (Associate Director of the VISN 5 MIRECC Clinical Core), along with assistance from Dr. Alicia Lucksted (VISN 5

MIRECC Recovery Resources Coordinator) and Ms. Sophia Autrey, MPH, (VISN 5 MIRECC Research Program Evaluator), is working on a MIRECC funded research pilot to conduct qualitative interviews with Veterans enrolled in the WRAP trainings. The primary aim of this effort is to learn more about Veteran reactions to and impressions of the WRAP program. Data collected from this pilot will be used to plan future grant projects and will aid Dr. Korobkin in his continued efforts to further use of WRAP in the VA.

Improving psychiatric care in VISN 5

Lisa Dixon, MD, MPH

A group of MIRECC researchers led by Dr. Lisa Dixon recently published the first MIRECC study that included all four hospitals in VISN 5. This study evaluated whether a brief three-month critical time intervention (B-CTI) model could improve continuity of psychiatric outpatient care for Veterans with serious mental illness. The study focused on Veterans being discharged from inpatient stays and included Veterans who had risk factors for treatment dropout such as medication non-adherence, but did not qualify for MHICM.

A total of 135 consenting Veterans were randomly as-

signed to receive either B-CTI or usual care. The three-month B-CTI intervention began before discharge, when a B-CTI clinician met with the Veteran. The clinician assessed their needs and developed a treatment plan that focused on identifying and removing barriers to ongoing outpatient treatment. Participating Veterans completed research interviews at baseline and three months later. Chart reviews provided data on service utilization in the six months post discharge.

The study found that the B-CTI group had significantly fewer days between hospital discharge and the first outpatient service. B-CTI par-

ticipants were more likely to have had an outpatient visit and to have had more total mental health and substance abuse visits within 30 and 180 days of discharge. Veterans who received B-CTI also had greater continuity of care and reported receiving more help in making and keeping medical and mental health appointments, making family contact and community connections, and receiving information on prescribed medications. We concluded that B-CTI targeted at the point of inpatient discharge can be helpful in promoting post discharge continuity of care for persons with serious mental illness.

Opportunity for Investigators

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The CSA-PRN is designed to expand recruitment efforts throughout the State of Maryland and to enhance the ability to recruit a representative sample of participants with serious mental illnesses for research studies. The CSA-PRN has created an infrastructure to link the local Maryland mental health authorities (i.e., the Core Service Agencies) with investigators to promote and support projects designed to develop and evaluate the efficacy of interventions in people with serious mental illnesses. In light of the large number of Veterans who receive their care in the community, these studies provide an opportunity to directly affect the care of these individuals, as well as indirectly enhance the care of those who receive their treatment in VA facilities through the evaluation of novel interventions.

Howard Goldman, MD, is the Director of the CSA-PRN and Sandra Sundeen, MS, is the Program Director. There are two Research Specialists, Deborah Piez and Daniel Nieberding, who work directly with project PIs and other research staff and help identify potential sites for the conduct of research projects and will facilitate the initiation of projects at these sites.

We are currently soliciting applications to use this resource. See below for application requirements. Applications will be reviewed by Drs. Lisa Dixon, Alan S. Bellack, Robert Buchanan, Howard Goldman, and Gunvant Thaker. Since the IP-RISP is only funded for 5 years and is not renewable, we would like to continue this as a resource for Department of Psychiatry Faculty. Approved applications are to include budget support for the Research Specialist position. We will work with each investigator to determine how to meet this request.

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The applications should be brief (1-2 pages) and include the following information:

- 1) Specific Aims: Primary and secondary aims and hypotheses.
- 2) Background and Significance: Why is the study important?
- 3) Methods: The methods section should provide a brief overview of study procedures, including recruitment procedures; inclusion/exclusion criteria; the time demand on study participants; and the total length of the proposed project.
- 4) Recruitment Needs: The recruitment needs should specify the overall recruitment plan and the specific recruitment services requested from RISP resources. In particular, the desired sample size and specific sample characteristics should be specified, i.e., what is the population from which you wish to sample and to whom do you wish to generalize your results? What are the specific locations (i.e., service settings or population locations) where we are most likely to locate your population and find your study participants? If applicable, please specify what previous recruitment efforts have been made for the project.

Send Applications to:

Robert Buchanan, MD

rwbuchanan@mprc.umaryland.edu

(410) 402-7876

Farewell and Good Luck

Shannon Thomas-Lohrman, MS, recently left the MIRECC for a position as the Director of Clinical Trials Management, Hematology Department, at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN. Ms. Thomas-Lohrman had worked with Dr. Alan S. Bellack since 1998, when she joined the Center for the Behavioral Treatment of Schizophrenia at UMSOM as a Project Coordinator and Research Supervisor. When the MIRECC was established, she took on the roles of IRB Coordinator, Director of Research Quality Assurance, and editor of the MIRECC Matters newsletter.

A've Childrey, MSW, LGSW, recently left the MIRECC for a position as Social Worker in the Outpatient Mental Health Clinic at the Perry Point VA Medical Center. A've Childrey joined the MIRECC in 2007 as a Research Assistant. She was responsible for a number of studies at the Baltimore VA Medical Center and primarily conducted all MIRECC studies at the Perry Point site.

Congratulations!

William Carpenter, MD, received the Mind of America Scientific Research Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness on October 14, 2009, for his research contributions on understanding and treatment of serious mental illness, especially schizophrenia.

Lisa Dixon, MD, MPH, received the American Psychiatric Association Health Services Senior Scholar Award for her contributions to mental health services research.

New MIRECC Coordinator



Matt Wiley, MPH, has recently taken on the responsibilities of the MIRECC Coordinator. He will work closely with the MIRECC Director, Alan S. Bellack, Ph.D., and Administrative Core Manager, Amy Drapalski, Ph.D., to ensure the successful implementation of the MIRECC clinical, education, and research functions. His duties will include budget and grant management, organization of MIRECC activities, as well as the coordination of daily operations.

Additionally, he will continue to serve as the Program Coordinator for the VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation Training Program (VA-PRT). The VA-PRT provides training, technical support and consultation in evidence-based psychosocial interventions, VA-wide, to mental health staff and program leaders working with seriously mentally ill Veterans and their families. To date, the VA-PRT has trained over 200 VA clinicians from all 21 of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN).

Matt joined the VISN 5 MIRECC in 2007 after 3 years of service at the Durham, North Carolina VA Medical Center and Duke University. He worked with a group of investigators whose research focus was posttraumatic stress disorder and nicotine dependence.

Upcoming Events

MONTHLY SGA CONSULTATION SEMINAR

First Thursday of every month:

January 7, 2010, & February 4, 2010

1:00 - 2:00 PM

MIRECC conference room, BVA (6A-168)

or PPVA VTel conference room, Bldg 364 (C-110)

or call 800-767-1750, code 79846

Psychopharmacology Case Conference: All VISN Clinicians are invited to bring questions about a difficult or challenging psychopharmacology case, or to just attend to listen. 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. Case Conference leaders are Robert Buchanan, MD, MIRECC investigator and Professor of Psychiatry at the UMB School of Medicine; Julie Kreyenbuhl, PharmD, PhD, MIRECC investigator and Assistant Professor in the UMB Department of Psychiatry, and Neil Sandson, MD, inpatient attending psychiatrist in the VAMHCS and MIRECC staff member.

RECOVERY-ORIENTED SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Application Deadline: March 1, 2010

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, PhD

MIRECC Recovery Coordinator

Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov

410-706-3244

VA SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

March 2-3, 2010

Baltimore, MD

The VISN 5 MIRECC is training staff on the delivery of Social Skills Training (SST) for Veterans with schizophrenia and other serious mental illness (schizoaffective, bipolar, and treatment refractory depression). This is a national initiative being led by the Office of Mental Health Services, and individuals in all VISNs are invited to participate. For this training initiative, only clinicians working with Veterans with SMI (as defined above) are asked to apply. Please direct all questions and application requests, including upcoming workshop dates, to:

Matthew Wiley, MPH

VA Social Skills Training Program Coordinator

Matthew.Wiley@va.gov



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QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ABOUT MIRECC MATTERS

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