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MIRECC MATTERS

JUNE 2009
Volume 10 Issue 3

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

Vets Represent VAMHCS at Annual Conference

Submitted by Mark Arenas, PhD

Three members of the Father's Group in the Baltimore Outpatient Substance Abuse Program will represent the VAMHCS at The 11th Annual International Fatherhood Conference taking place June 16-19, 2009, in downtown Baltimore. The focus of this year's Conference is "Maximizing Father Engagement: Celebrating 100 Years of Father's Day in America", and the veterans will present a workshop titled "Engaging Veterans Seeking Treatment for Substance Abuse: Integrating the Restoration of Health with the Restoration of Ones Identity as a Father". In it, they will describe their personal experiences and how they apply principles of recovery to being a good family man and father.

Please see *Vets at Conference* on page 2

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Meet the New PSTs

Submitted by Karen Wilson, BSN, MHA

The VAMHCS Mental Health Clinical Center has hired the first Peer Support Technicians (PSTs) for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Programs (PRRCs). PSTs are individuals who have personal experience with mental illness and recovery. They know firsthand the struggles of living with a mental illness and are viable examples that recovery is possible. Richard Moore and Royal Riddick began their new positions on May 11, 2009. Richard is working with the Perry Point PRRC and Royal with the Baltimore program.

Want to know a little more about them?

Please see *PSTs* on page 3

"I give because it's natural for me."

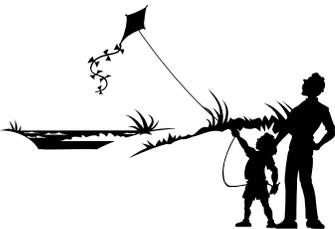
Many Faces of Mental Illness

Submitted by Karen Wilson, BSN, MHA

May was National Mental Health Month - a great time to separate behavioral health fact from fiction and draw attention to the stigma that many people with mental illness face. The Mental Health Recovery Awareness Task Group, which includes veterans, Local Recovery Coordinators, MHCC and MIRECC staff, worked hard to bring greater awareness to mental illness during the month. One highlight of their efforts was the "Many Faces of Mental Illness", presented in Baltimore and Perry Point. In this event, veterans showcased their talents by creating art work in various mediums, painting masks, writing poetry, and performing dance routines. They also participated at all levels of the planning and presentation of the exhibit. A highly effective anti-stigma tool, the event sparked conversations about mental illness between vets and the VAHMCS personnel who attended.



Vets at Conference from page 1



The Father's Group is a psychoeducational group that encourages men to improve their parenting skills and identity as a father as they take steps to recover from drug and alcohol addiction. The goals of the Father's Group include strengthening the bond between veterans and their children, breaking the cycle of non-involvement, re-establishing family connections by making amends, and developing meaningful and reliable fathering styles.

Attendance at this conference was made possible by the VISN 5 MIRECC Small Grants Program for Recovery-Fostering Clinical and Educational Innovations. This is the second year the group has been awarded the funding. The first year, the vets *saw* a fatherhood conference; this year they are *doing* a conference presentation; next year, they may *teach one*!

If you would like more information about the Father's Group, please contact Mark Arenas at mark.arenas@va.gov or 410-605-7406.

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Richard Moore began his government career in the Air Force (1977 to 1981) and was stationed in Charlestown, SC and Anchorage, AK. In 1983, he began working in the VA in Dental Service and later transferred to Nursing Service. He's been working in the Mental Health Clinical Center for 22 years. Richard is looking forward to his new position as a PST in the Perry Point PRRC. He brings an abundance of professional and life experiences to the job and the PRRC staff is thrilled to have him as a member of the team.

Royal Riddick, a Baltimore native, served in the Marine Corps and in Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) as a career counselor and regional coordinator for the Talent Search Academic Program in the Alaskan bush. In 1998, he became involved with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) through the Living with Schizophrenia and Other Major Mental Illnesses Program. Royal became the Coordinator of the program and was trained as a state and national trainer. He attended the first training for Peer to Peer Relapse Prevention Mentors and was later trained as a NAMI Care Peer Support Group Facilitator. Royal states that spirituality is an important part of his recovery. "Just like water, we nurture other people without needing to take credit or exert influence over them. Water gives because that is its nature. Likewise, I give because it's natural for me."

We welcome Richard and Royal and know they will inspire hope about Recovery and support our veterans in their journey toward leading a full and meaningful life.



Congrats Are In Order!

We are pleased to announce that Lisa Dixon, MD, MPH, has been chosen as the 2009 recipient of the Wayne Fenton, MD Award for Exceptional Clinical Care. The award is given annually in recognition of extraordinary commitment to individuals with schizophrenia, and honors an individual who embodies Dr. Fenton's devotion to the care of patients combined with innovative approaches and exceptional effort. The award will be announced in the September, 2009 issue of the Schizophrenia Bulletin.



Psychopharmacology Case Conference Expanded

The VISN 5 MIRECC Psychopharmacology Case Conference has been revised and expanded. In addition to having cases scheduled in advance for presentation, any clinician can now bring a question to the conference about a difficult or challenging psychopharmacology case. The focus of the conference has also been expanded to include all areas of psychopharmacology.

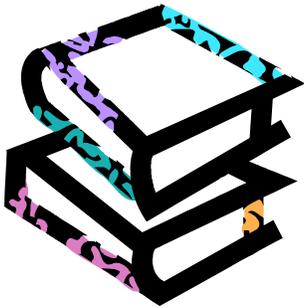
Clinicians are encouraged to attend and bring questions about difficult psychopharmacology cases; however, you are invited to attend even if you don't have a case to present. The Case Conference is held on the first Thursday of every month at 1:00 PM in the BVA MIRECC conference room, 6th floor, Suite 6A-168. Attendance by conference call is encouraged for those not located at Baltimore, and more lines have been added to give everyone a chance to get on the call. The call in number is: 1-800-767-1750, access code 79846.

Your Case Conference leaders are:

Robert Buchanan, MD, is a MIRECC investigator and Professor of Psychiatry at the UMB School of Medicine. He is an internationally renowned expert on the pharmacological treatment of people with schizophrenia. He has conducted numerous studies examining the efficacy and safety of antipsychotic and other pharmacological agents for the treatment of persistent positive and negative symptoms and cognitive impairments, and has published approximately 165 papers in peer reviewed journals. He is a Co-Investigator on the recent revision of the Schizophrenia PORT Psychopharmacologic Treatment Recommendations.

Julie Kreyenbuhl, PharmD, PhD, has both clinical pharmacy and mental health services research training and has been a MIRECC investigator since 2000. She is also an Assistant Professor in the UMB Department of Psychiatry and is first author or co-author on over 40 papers published in peer-reviewed journals. Dr. Kreyenbuhl is nationally recognized for her work on developing and disseminating evidence-based guidelines for the treatment of schizophrenia, most recently as the Principal Investigator of a NIMH- and VA-supported effort to update the Schizophrenia PORT Treatment Recommendations. She is also the recipient of a VA HSR&D Merit Award in which she is testing the effectiveness of a patient-centered computerized tool for increasing rates of screening for the metabolic side effects of second-generation antipsychotic medications.

Neil Sandson, MD, is a national expert on drug-drug interactions. He published one of the definitive text books on that topic, and has published approximately 30 scientific articles, book chapters, or books. He has provided psychopharmacologic consultation to clinicians in the Baltimore area for many years, and has been an inpatient attending psychiatrist in the VAMHCS since 2007.



Recent MIRECC Publications

Dixon L, Goldberg R, Iannone V, Lucksted A, Brown C, Kreyenbuhl J, Fang L, Potts W: Use of a Critical Time Intervention to Promote Continuity of Care After Psychiatric Inpatient Hospitalization for Severe Mental Illness, *Psychiatric Services*, Psychiatric Services 2009 60:451-458.

UPCOMING EVENTS

VA ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE:

Meeting the Diverse Mental Health Needs of Veterans: Implementing the Uniform Services Handbook

July 21- 23, 2009

Marriott Baltimore Waterfront Hotel
700 Aliceanna Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

The conference will focus on the current state of implementation of the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook, the utilization of enhancement funding, research-informed practices, and best practices identified by clinicians in the field. Participants will be aware of the diverse clinical, research and educational initiatives related to the Handbook and how the initiatives can be best implemented and monitored in their networks, local medical centers, and community clinics. The conference will also enhance collaboration with Vet Centers and other community partners in the promotion of family psycho-education models and increased utilization of peer-to-peer support services. Finally, the conference will foster collaboration among researchers, clinicians and educators, thus increasing the opportunities for new VA research while enhancing opportunities for psychiatry and psychology fellows.

For more information or to register, go to:

http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/vacatalog/cu_detail.asp?id=25298.

MONTHLY SGA CONSULTATION SEMINAR

First Thursday of every month:

July 2, 2009

August 6, 2009

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

Please see page 4 of this newsletter for details.

RECOVERY-ORIENTED SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Application Deadline: September 1, 2009

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



Visit our website at
<http://www.va.gov/VISN5mirecc>