

THE VISN 5 MIRECC MATTERS

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

December 19, 2005 Volume 6, No. 6

Editor: Shannon Thomas-Lohrman, MS (shannon.thomas-lohrman@med.va.gov)

HIV DUAL DIAGNOSIS RESEARCH

Submitted by Seth Himelhoch, MD, MPH

In the Fall of 2005, **Seth Himelhoch, MD, MPH**, began work on his NIDA-sponsored project entitled *HIV Care for Substance Users with Psychiatric Disorders*. The goal of this project is to develop an assertive case management intervention targeting HIV+ individuals with co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders who are at risk of not receiving HIV-related medical care. The results of this study will lead to a randomized control trial to test the preliminary effectiveness of the intervention.

Dr. Himelhoch will soon begin work on a project entitled *Adapting and Pilot Testing Telephone Psychotherapy for Depressed HIV+ Individuals*. The goal of this study is to test a telephone psychotherapy and telephone care management program targeting HIV+ depressed individuals in adult outpatient HIV clinics. This is a critical study as individuals with HIV have at least twice the prevalence of depression than that of the general population, and often have great difficulty accessing clinic-based mental health treatment.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL FAMILY CONFERENCE

Submitted by Cynthia Clark, RN, C, CD

On Saturday, October 22, 2005, the VISN 5 MIRECC and clinical staff from the Perry Point VA Medical Center hosted a conference for veterans with mental illness and their families entitled "Mental Illness: Pathways to Recovery". The agenda incorporated a variety of speakers, including **Alicia Lucksted, PhD**, who presented information about the Recovery model and the impact of family/caregivers in the process of recovery from mental illness. Consumers involved with The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) presented a workshop titled "In Our Own Voices", in which they shared their own journeys toward recovery. They also presented a video which highlighted several other consumers and their personal experiences. Finally, **Maureen Kilby, NP**, provided information about the NAMI-sponsored Family-to-Family educational program.

Sixty attendees, which included veterans, family members, Community Residence staff, and VA clinical staff enjoyed the day, and their evaluations were very enthusiastic. If you have not had the chance to attend one of our family conferences, please watch the Upcoming Events in this newsletter for the next one!

LEARNING THROUGH TELECONFERENCING

Submitted by Richard Goldberg, PhD

VA providers from the four VISN 5 medical centers recently participated in two national teleconferences sponsored by The US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association. The first conference focused on the use of motivational interviewing for adults with psychotic disorders and co-occurring substance use disorders. The second focused on facilitating recovery using community integration strategies. The sessions included didactic discussion, modeling and a participant question and answer period. MIRECC staff also attended and have since been meeting with providers to discuss how to implement the new strategies and concepts. The VISN 5 MIRECC is pleased to have been able to organize and support these teleconferences.

WELCOME TO NEW MIRECC STAFF

Bernadette Guthrie, MS, joins us as a study therapist for the Cognitive Remediation studies. Bernadette received her Masters degree in

Clinical Community Counseling at Johns Hopkins University in 1999. Prior to coming to the MIRECC, she was a Research Program Coordinator in the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, and worked as a Rehabilitation Therapist at Johns Hopkins Bayview Crossroads Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program.

Belinda Kauffman, BS, recently joined the MIRECC as a Research Analyst for the Center for the Behavioral Treatment of Schizophrenia. Before joining us, she worked as a Data Manager for a clinical research company. Belinda will be filling a critical role as she manages the data for five MIRECC studies.

The staff of the VISN 5 MIRECC wish you and yours a happy holiday season!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
<http://www.va.gov/visn5mirecc>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Support and Education Program

January 21, 2006

10:00 – 11:30 AM

Baltimore VA Medical Center, Room 2B-136

The Family Support and Education Program is a monthly program for family members of veterans with serious mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression. The program is designed to help families support veterans' treatment and recovery, as well as assist family members and other caregivers as they cope with the effects of mental illness on the family. Group meetings are held one Saturday a month at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, and involve presentation of information and discussion, which is adapted to the needs of family members and veterans who attend.

To register for the workshop, or if you have any questions about the program, please contact Dr. Richard Goldberg by phone: (410) 706-2490, or email: rgoldber@psych.umaryland.edu.