

BRIEFINGS

The latest news and updates from the Mid-Atlantic MIRECC



20 YEARS

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Director's Update



The VISN 6 MIRECC continues to celebrate 20 years of research, education and clinical service to our Veterans and their families. This newsletter edition will highlight some of the accomplishments and impacts of the VISN 6 MIRECC Research Core.

The VISN 6 MIRECC has enrolled the largest OEF/OIF/OND post-deployment mental health (PDMH) repository in the VA and is currently expanding to include a 10-year follow of this cohort. To date, we have successfully re-enrolled almost 900 Veterans! The PDMH repository is a substantial resource for all our research laboratories, as it contains a well-characterized dataset and provides substantial recruitment opportunities as almost all Veterans have consented to be recontacted for additional studies. Our Genetics Laboratory utilizes the PDMH repository and other VA datasets and recently conducted the largest genetic study of suicidal thoughts and behaviors to date and identified some promising genetic markers that may predict suicidal ideation. The Interventions and Metabolomics Laboratory also capitalizes on the PDMH repository, using biomarker informed data to conduct multiple randomized clinical trials for several post-deployment mental health conditions such as chronic pain, PTSD and TBI. Our Neuroimaging Laboratory has MRI brain scans for a subset of the PDMH cohort and is using machine learning and artificial intelligence methodologies to predict brain age risk factors, such as TBI and toxic exposures.

Continue





Director's Update, Cont'd

Our Neurocognition Laboratory has a battery of neurocognitive assessments for a subset of the PDMH sample and in collaboration with VA Central Office, the Neurocognitive Laboratory provides an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) "Ask the Expert" consultation service for providers and recently developed national CPRS ADHD templates. Our Health Services Laboratory has developed and implemented multiple mobile interventions for postdeployment health conditions including smoking cessation, anger reduction and suicidal thoughts, as well as a brief psychosocial treatment to reduce non-suicidal self-injury. Finally, our basic science efforts through our Neuroscience Laboratory include exploration of how postdeployment mental health may be negatively affected by experiences prior to enlistment, such as adolescent alcohol use.

This is just a small sample of the tremendous translational science the VISN 6 MIRECC conducts. I'd like to thank our investigators and their teams for their continued commitment to improve mental health care for Iraq/Afghanistan-era Veterans and their families. The VISN 6 MIRECC has developed a vast and impressive research portfolio over the past 20 years, and I look forward to the new and exciting innovations to be developed in the next 20!

Jennifer C. Naylor, PhD

Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC



FOCUS ON THE VISN

NEWS

THANK
YOU

Special THANKS NOTE



The VISN 6 MIRECC would like to express our sincere gratitude for the Non-Profit Foundations supporting our 2024 Expert Shareholder Forum (Durham, Richmond, Salisbury).



HONORS, GRANTS AND AWARDS

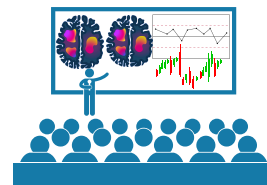
★ **Dr. Shura Robert, Psy.D., ABPP-CN**, was granted fellow status with the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN). "Fellow status is the highest honor that NAN bestows upon members. Fellows are members of NAN who have demonstrated evidence of advancing the science and profession of clinical neuropsychology. Fellow status requires that a person's work is recognized in some of the following areas: scientific and scholarly publications, teaching, volunteering in NAN, significant activities contributing to the advancement of the profession of neuropsychology, and clinical excellence."

★ **Dr. Stephanie Wells, Ph.D.**, has been awarded the Employee of the Quarter by HSR, Durham VA.



EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION

Scientific Posters, Presentations, Webinars,
Conferences and Other Activities



Acierno, R., Blount, T., Hall-Clark, B., Held, P., Pruiksma, K. E., Wells, S. Y., (October, 2024). Ask an expert clinician. Invited panel presented at the 9th annual San Antonio Combat PTSD Conference, San Antonio, TX.

López-Ojeda, W. (October, 2024). Insights of the Medical Metaverse: Extended Reality (XR) and Other Technologies for Clinical Neurosciences, Medical Education and Training. MIRECC CoEd Group. (Virtual presentation)

Wells, S. Y., Shapiro, A., Murray, R. D., Dedert, E. A., Kehle-Forbes, S., Calhoun, P. S., Jackson, G. L. (October, 2024). VA provider, administrator, and veteran perspectives of massed PTSD treatment in VA PTSD Outpatient Clinics. Invited presentation at the 9th annual San Antonio Combat PTSD Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Wells, S. Y., Shapiro, A., Dedert, E., Kehle-Forbes, S., Calhoun, P. Murray, R. D. & Jackson, G. (September, 2024). VA Providers' and Administrators Perceived Barriers and Facilitators of Massed PTSD Treatment Delivery in VA PTSD Outpatient Clinics: A Qualitative Examination. In Gathering Veteran and Provider Perspectives to Inform Multilevel Implementation Strategies for Evidence-Based Psychotherapies. Symposium presented at the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies 40th Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

Wells, S. Y., Shapiro, A., Dedert, E., Jackson, G., Calhoun, P. Murray, R. D. & Kehle-Forbes, S. (September, 2024). Veterans Perceptions of Massed Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Evidence-Based Psychotherapies in VA PTSD Outpatient Clinics. In Implementing Massed Treatment in Varied Clinical Settings: A mixed-methods examination of feasibility and acceptability. Symposium presented at the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies 40th Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

Wells, S. Y., Murray, R. D., Shapiro, A., Kehle-Forbes, S., Dedert, E. Calhoun, P., & Jackson, G. (September, 2024). VA providers' and administrators' perceptions of barriers and facilitators to implementing massed PTSD treatment in VA PTSD outpatient clinics. National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations 32nd annual meeting, Washington, DC. (Poster presentation)

**Scientific Articles:**

Bjork, J.M., Reisweber, J., Perrin, P.B., Plonski, P.E., Dismuke-Greer, C.E. (2024). Neurocognitive Function and Medical Care Utilization in Veterans Treated for Substance Use Disorder. Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-024-00621-x>

Brown, G.K., Batdorf, W.H., Dedert, E.A., Kumpula, M.J., Day, K.T., Stanley, B., Crowe, C. (2024). National implementation of advanced training in the safety planning intervention in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system. Psychological Services. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ser0000880>

López-Ojeda, W. & Hurley, R.A. (in press). Myokines and the Brain: A Novel Neuromuscular Endocrine Loop. J Neuropsychiatry Clin Neurosc.

Pinciotti, C. M., Ponzini, G. T., Columbo, G. M., McLean, C. P., Fletcher, T. L., Hundt, N. E., Wadsworth, L. P., Van Kirk, N., Wells, S. Y., Abramowitz, J. S., Goodman, W. K., & Storch, E. A. (2024). Misconceptions among mental health treatment providers about OCD and PTSD. Behavior Therapy. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2024.09.003>

Shepherd-Banigan, M., Salameah, H., Shapiro, A., Stechuchak, K., Wells, S. Y., Neiman, J., Weidenbacher, H., Eldridge, M., Lanford, T., Bokhour, B., Glynn, S., Ruffin, R., Van Houtven, C., Edelman, D., Calhoun, P., Swinkels, C., Dedert, E., Ackland, P. (in press). Family-involved interventions may offer unique benefits for Veterans with PTSD experiencing high family strain. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy.

Vassileva, J., Psederska, E., Bjork, J.M. (in press). Impulsivity in opioid use disorder: The unique role of negative affect. Nature Reviews Psychology.

Wells, S. Y., Knopp, K., Wachsmann, T., Dillon, K. H., Walker, H., Sippel, L., Morland, L., & Glassman, L. (2024). Examining the impact of brief couples-based posttraumatic stress disorder treatments on anger and psychological aggression in veterans and their partners. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.23099>

Wells, S.Y., Wilhite, E.R., Weber, M.C., Blakey, S.M., Callaway, C., Kehle-Forbes, S., Morland, L.A., Mackintosh, M.A., Dedert, E.A., Jackson, G., Sohn, M.J., Grubbs, K.M. (in press). Beyond symptom reduction: Veterans' goals for posttraumatic stress disorder treatment. Journal of Traumatic Stress.

Wiese, A.M., Reisweber, J.R., Lambert, M., Bjork, J.M. (2024). Transcending Self Therapy-Virtual Reality (TST-VR) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Completion in Veterans. Journal of Medical Extended Reality. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jmxr.2024.0025>



RESOURCES FOR VETERANS & FAMILIES

Visit [Self-help resources](#) to obtain education and support information for Veterans, friends and family members who may be facing mental health challenges. VA specialists have assembled a short list of reviewer's recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the most appropriate information for you.

Please click on each resource topic for more information.

- [General Mental Health](#)
- [Depression & Anxiety](#)
- [PTSD](#)
- [Substance Use Disorder \(SUD\)](#)



For additional help, access "[Learn About Resources and Support.](#)"



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. For more information, click [here](#).

- [Moving Forward](#)
- [Veteran Parenting](#)
- [Anger Management](#)
- [Path to Better Sleep](#)

NC DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

The DMVA 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.

To view/download the newest guide sections click [here](#).



UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR

NATIONAL CBOC MENTAL HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS (GRs) and OTHER PRESENTATIONS

Check the website for previous and upcoming webinars in this series available for credit in TMS.

For direct registration links, click [here](#).



For previous GRs recordings click [here](#).

MIRECC PRESENTS WEBINARS

(Join sessions via the Adobe Connect app):

Register through VA TMS EEA then attend LIVE at

<http://va-eecc-ees.adobeconnect.com/mireccpresents/>



1st and 3rd Wednesdays
from October to June, 12 to 1pm (PT)

Access the MIRECC Presents webinar series calendar for upcoming events online at <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/vision20/education/webinars-mirecc-presents.asp>

PROVIDER EDUCATION



PACERS is an education program for health care staff who care for Veterans with cognitive disorders and their caregivers. While this program targets rural health care staff, providers working in any setting can benefit from this information.

The PACERS online training curriculum includes six e-learning courses; each course is accredited for 1 hour of continuing education. There are also 5 videos that cover important topics related to cognitive impairment, including driving, self-neglect, challenging behaviors, Alzheimer's disease, and end-of-life.

VA Providers: Take courses using TMS links

Non-VA Providers: Use TRAIN links

Course 1: Driving and Dementia-Hanging up the Keys.

Course 2: How to Deliver the Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease.

Course 3: How to Have an End of Life Discussion.

Course 4: How to Identify Self-Neglect.

Course 5: Addressing Decision-Making and Safety in Dementia.

VISIT PACERS for links to each course.





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VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

BRIEFINGS

Stay Up to Date on Mid-Atlantic MIRECC
Contact (Nancy.martino@va.gov) to ensure
you're on the mailing list to receive copies of
our newsletter.

Next Issue: WINTER 2024

Season's Greetings

