



BRIEFINGS



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DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

I am excited to share the collaborative development of a pilot intervention designed to teach Veteran family members and other loved ones how to effectively support Veterans who are at risk for suicidal ideation and behaviors. We know that family members and loved ones play critical roles to support Active-Duty Service Members and Veterans throughout their time in service and while they transition to civilian life. Family and loved ones are often the first to recognize when a Veteran is struggling with mental health symptoms and having thoughts

of suicide (Sayers et al., 2021) and are therefore in the unique position to intervene early, potentially reducing the risk of Veteran suicide. With support from the Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP) and the Suicide Prevention Research Impact Network Core (SPRINT), Drs. Steven Sayers and Cindy Swinkels developed an innovative and novel intervention focused on educating and coaching Veteran family members on how to talk to Veterans about suicide prevention.

The project brought together experts from VISN 2, VISN 2 COE, VISN 4, VISN 6 and multiple academic partners with expertise in family therapy and suicide prevention who partnered with the New York State's Governor's Challenge workgroup to implement the suicide prevention intervention.

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DIRECTOR'S UPDATE, Continued

The intervention incorporates the use of the New York State's Governor's Challenge website, WorriedAboutaVeteran.org, which provides valuable information about how to communicate with Veterans about suicidal ideation and safe gun storage and includes brief telephone calls where family members are taught how to encourage Veterans to secure lethal means of suicide, which are often firearms. Initial findings demonstrate that family members will engage on this topic, interact with the website, and engage in subsequent conversations with their Veteran. This intervention is currently in a pilot phase but is demonstrating promise and giving family members and loved one's tools to support their Veterans. We look forward to learning and sharing more as the project continues to enroll.

Jennifer C. Naylor, PhD

Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC

FOCUS ON THE VISN

Honors, Grants and Awards



Dr. Emily Helene Fannick, PsyD was recently selected to serve a 1- year term as a member on the *National VA Psychology Training Council (VAPTC) Administrative Committee*. This organization directly supports the needs of training directors and the quality of psychology training programs at all training levels (practicum, internship, and postdoc) within the VA, nationally. Congratulations!

Dr. James Bjork, PhD new article entitled: [Impulsivity in opioid use disorder: The unique role of negative affect](#) (included in this newsletter- page 4), was accepted for publication by *Nature Reviews Psychology*. Congratulations!

Drs. López-Ojeda, PhD, MS and Hurley, MD were recognized for their contributions to Windows to the Brain of [The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences \(JNCN\) in 2024](#). Once again, their papers were recognized as Top/among the Top Ten articles in the following categories: *Top Ten "Most Discussed" 2024 Articles in JNCN*, which they authored three of the list including Top two. They also, made it to the *Top Ten "Most Accessed" 2024 JNCN Articles on psychiatryonline.org/journal/jnp*, which they authored four of the list including Top three. Congratulations!

Dr. Mollie A. McDonald, PhD was recently awarded the *American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN) Conference Mentor Scholarship* for the upcoming AACN conference this year. Congratulations!

EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION



Scientific Posters, Presentations, Webinars, Conferences and Other Activities

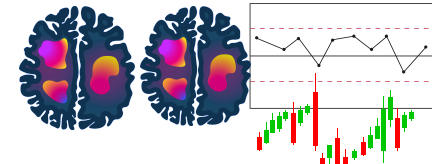
Albertorio, A. D., Herring, T. T., Ingram, P. B., Armistead-Jehle, P., **Shura, R. D.**, Turkstra, L., Lu, L. O., Curtiss, G., Bowles, A. O., Eapen, B. C., & Cooper, D. B. (November, 2024). Examining Test-Retest Reliability and Mean Score Differences in Self-Reported Neuropsychological Symptoms in Active-Duty and Veterans with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI). Poster presented at the National Academy of Neuropsychology 44th Annual Conference. Austin, TX.

Hermes, E., van Engelen, L., Wells, D., Schreiber, M., Barry, M., Emens, J., **Shura, R. D.**, & Kearns, J. (January, 2025). Improving the Diagnostic Evaluation of Over 180,000 Veterans with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Poster presented at the American Professional Society of ADHD and Related Disorders (APSARD) annual conference. San Diego, CA.

Herring, T. T., Ingram, P. B., Armistead-Jehle, P., **Shura, R. D.**, Turkstra, L., Lu, L. O., Curtiss, G., Bowles, A. O., Eapen, B. C., & Cooper, D. B. (November, 2024). Evaluating the MMPI-3 Somatic/Cognitive Scales in Service Members and Veterans with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI). Poster presented at the National Academy of Neuropsychology 44th Annual Conference. Austin, TX.

Sapp, A. A., Ingram, P. B., Armistead-Jehle, P., **Shura, R. D.**, Turkstra, L., Lu, L. O., Curtiss, G., Bowles, A. O., Eapen, B. C., & Cooper, D. B. (November, 2024). Assessing MMPI-3 Substantive Scales in Service Members and Veterans with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI): Association with Criterion Symptom Measures. Poster presented at the National Academy of Neuropsychology 44th Annual Conference. Austin, TX.

PUBLICATIONS



Scientific Articles

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

López-Ojeda, W. & Hurley, R.A. (in press). New Trends in Peptide Therapies: Perspectives and Implications for Clinical Neurosciences. *J Neuropsychiatry Clin Neurosc.*

Milosavich, K., Aurora, P., Beckham, J. C., Elbogen, E. B., & Dillon, K. H. (in press). Anger mediates the relationship between changes in alcohol use and violence: A longitudinal examination among Iraq/Afghanistan-era veterans. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*.

Shepherd-Banigan, M., Salameh, H., Shapiro, A., Stechuchak, K., Wells, S.Y., Neiman, J., Weidenbacher, H.J., Eldridge, M.R., Lanford, T., Bokhour, B., Lynn, S., Ruffin, R., Van Houtven, C.H., Edelman, D., Calhoun, P.S., Swinkels, C., Dedert, E.A., Ackland, P.E. (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. (2025). Impulsivity in opioid use disorder: The unique role of negative affect. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44159-025-00404-6>

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*.

Book Chapters

McDonald, M. A., & Hazlett-Stevens, H. (2024). Generalized anxiety disorder. In D. G. Friedman-Wheeler & A. E. Wenzel (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Mood and Anxiety Disorders*. SAGE Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071886229.n197>

Shura, R. D. & Giromini, L. (2025). Free-Standing Symptom Validity Tests in Psychological Injury Evaluations: Focus on the Structured Inventory of Malingered Symptomatology (SIMS) and the Inventory of Problems - 29 (IOP-29). In G. Young, L. Giromini, J. R. Soble, R. Rogers, & B. E. Levitt (Eds.), *Handbook of psychological injury and Law* (pp. 483 – 507). Springer.

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](#)."

PROVIDER EDUCATION

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](#).

MIRECC PRESENTS WEBINARS

Register through VA TMS EEA then attend

LIVE at

<http://va-eerc->

[ees.adobeconnect.com/mireccpresents/](https://www.adobeconnect.com/mireccpresents/)

Access the MIRECC Presents webinar series calendar for upcoming events online at

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn20/Education/webinars-mirecc-presents.asp>

[VETERANS TRAININGS](#). 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.

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

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](#).

[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 may benefit from this information.

VA Providers: Take courses using TMS links

Non-VA Providers: Use [TRAIN](#) links

Course 1: Dementia and Delirium

Course 2: Identifying and Assessing for Dementia

Course 3: Treating Dementia - Case Studies

Course 4: Normal Cognitive Aging and Dementia Caregiving

Course 5: Addressing Decision Making and Safety in Dementia

Course 6: Driving and Dementia

[VISIT PACERS](#) for links to each course.

RESEARCH SITES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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BRIEFINGS

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Next Issue: SPRING 2025



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