Post-Doctoral Fellowship Description:

The VISN 2 Center for Integrated Healthcare (CIH) is home to a VA Office of Academic Affiliations-sponsored postdoctoral psychology fellowship as a member of VA's Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment (MIRECC). This 2-year program is designed to prepare psychologists to become outstanding clinical researchers in the area of Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI). A sample training plan can be found at the end of this document.

Research training goals include building an individual research portfolio in PC-MHI while enhancing technical skills necessary to conduct applied research. Fellows are encouraged to collaborate with senior staff and peers in developing research proposals, conducting IRB-approved research, and preparing and submitting grant proposals. Manuscript preparation and publication in peer-reviewed journals is also required. Opportunities are available to collaborate and receive feedback on manuscript drafts, and to attend and present at academic conferences. In addition, opportunities exist to serve on committees and as scientific peer reviewers for local research and development office(s) as well as scholarly journals. Individual mentoring, biostatistical consultation, and research assistant support are made available to fellows in service of their research goals.

Clinical training goals focus on co-located collaborative care in both an integrated primary care clinic and an interdisciplinary geriatric specialty clinic. This aspect of training is designed to promote fellows' abilities to identify and address a wide range of behavioral and mental health concerns that may impact Veterans of all ages in primary care settings. Areas of skill development include working with medical providers in a collaborative fashion, and enhancing abilities to function as a member of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams.

In addition to direct service delivery, fellows are also encouraged to participate in clinical program development and evaluation activities, to include quality improvement initiatives and the development and implementation of educational offerings for psychology practicum students, pre-doctoral interns, and other providers. Opportunities for teaching (e.g., guest

lectures, webinars) have been available at times. Examples of past activities include delivering a psychology intern seminar on psychology in primary care, developing a didactic training program for psychology practicum students, teaching graduate courses on psychological assessment and statistics. Fellows are academically affiliated with the University at Buffalo, and share responsibilities with training staff in training psychology practicum students from the University.

In addition to the research and clinical training provided on-site at the Center for Integrated Healthcare, training and professional development opportunities are also available through the fellowship program's Hub Site. Fellows participate in monthly teleconferences which highlight recent developments in psychological and psychiatric research, and are encouraged to participate in manuscript and grant-writing groups as well as biostatistical tutorials. Staff at the Hub Site are also available by appointment to facilitate other aspects of professional development, such as refining CVs and providing consultation in other areas.

For more details, please visit the Advanced MIRECC/CoE Fellowship Website

*This postdoctoral program meets state licensure requirements.

**Please note that this program is non-accredited. For further information on accreditation status, contact:

Committee on Accreditation
c/o Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation Education Directorate
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
202-336-5679
TDD: 202-336-6123
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Program Philosophy

The Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Center for Integrated Healthcare and affiliated with the VA Western New York Healthcare System offers early career psychologists traditional training in professional clinical research and clinical psychology. This training program follows a scientist-practitioner model.

Since 2004, the Center for Integrated Healthcare has strived to improve the quality of Veterans' health care by supporting the implementation of Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI). Our center works to achieve this mission by conducting clinical research that:

- Describes processes and outcomes of integrated primary care in VA
- Develops, evaluates, and implements brief treatments for common mental health conditions in primary care
- Evaluates VA's implementation of PC-MHI, to include co-located collaborative care and care management
- Supports the development and administration of national VA training programs focused on integrated primary care
- Improves the consistent use of evidence-based practice for the delivery of mental health services in primary care
- Supports the development of new technology to improve access to care.

Clinical/ Education goals include enhancing knowledge, practice, and competencies in PC-MHI.

Training Structure:

Our program adheres to the overarching mandate of VA's Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment (MIRECC)—to train psychologists to become leading clinical researchers in high priorities of Veteran mental health. However, the primary purpose is to prepare fellows for successful entry into or entry-level professional positions, particularly in Medical Center, academic and public sector health care settings. This eventual expected outcome rests on two primary goals of the training program: 1) the development of intermediate to advanced skills in core competencies of primary care research and primary care psychology, and 2) the further development of advanced competencies in a focused area of PC-MHI practice of particular interest to the individual trainee (e.g., postdeployment health, detection of dementia, brief interventions for anxiety). These goals are achieved through supervised experience in clinical research, direct patient care, and didactics nested within a scientist-practitioner model.

Over the course of this 2-year program, fellows will dedicate approximately 75% of their time to clinical research, and 25% to direct patient care. A minimum of four hours of weekly research and clinical supervision are provided in individual and group formats. Our program emphasizes the assessment and treatment of mental and behavioral health concerns that commonly occur in the VA's integrated primary care settings, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and alcohol misuse. The majority of research and clinical training will address these areas. A sample training plan is available below.

Similar to other Medical Center employees, fellows are scheduled to work a 40-hour week (typically 8:00am to 4:30pm), with 30 minutes for lunch. Per VA policy, full time trainees are given credit for 2,080 hours of training for the complete year. The program may be extended for a third year to further develop advanced competencies in clinical research. Application for a third year of funding is competitive, requiring approval from the Office of Academic Affiliations. For more details, please visit the Advanced MIRECC/CoE Fellowship Website

Research Training

Research training comprises approximately 75% of fellowship activities, and focuses primarily upon issues germane to primary care-mental health. During protected time for patient-oriented research, Fellows will:

- Develop awareness of pressing clinical /research priorities within VA.
- Develop skills in grant writing.
- Learn to navigate the landscape of career development awards.
- Develop advanced skills in mental health research methodology and statistical analyses; scientific writing and presentation; and research ethics in mental health research, in order to understand the best evidence-based approach to clinical research and treatment.
- Be provided with structured didactics that address an array of topics ranging from advanced research methodologies, and professional writing, and research ethics.

Fellows are also encouraged to participate in local opportunities for formal presentation of their clinical research findings.

CIH investigators research areas such as assessment and treatment of depression, PTSD, alcohol misuse and pain management, and the detection of cognitive impairment in the primary care setting. Fellows collaborate with research mentors to develop a research training plan and their own research project(s). Early goals typically include developing an initial research proposal and obtaining IRB approval for a first year project. Fellows often will collaborate with their research supervisor(s) on his/ her/ their ongoing projects as well. Over the course of the training period, fellows will collect and analyze data, present results at national meetings, and prepare at least two manuscripts for publication. At least one of these should be a first-authored publication. Opportunities also exist to co-author papers with other CIH mentors and research staff. As fellows develop their research and writing skills, they also will begin to draft, and ultimately aim to submit, a grant application in their area of interest as it pertains to primary care-mental health integration.

Biostatistical consultation is available via CIH and MIRECC Fellowship Hub Site staff. Formal research supervision is provided by the fellow's research mentor at weekly meetings. These meetings serve as an opportunity to discuss research ideas, progress, and challenges. Informal supervision will be provided via other meetings and communication as well, and as requested by the fellow. Other supervisory contact is available via workgroups and at specific research project/ team meetings. Feedback on grant submissions, ideas, and progress is available via monthly research meetings and also through the Hub Site.

Supervisor and adjunct faculty biographies and research activities are available here: Supervisor & Adjunct Faculty Information

Clinical Training

Direct patient care comprises approximately 25% of fellowship activities. The focus of clinical training is on the integration of mental health services in VA primary care, and delivery of brief, evidence-based services to Veterans of all age groups. We emphasize the development of general and advanced clinical competencies and also offer additional training for the development of specific skills within the area of primary care-mental health integration.

Clinical services are provided in two settings: 1) an integrated VA primary care clinic, and 2) an interdisciplinary Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) clinic. Primary care-mental health appointments tend to be brief (20-30 minutes) and focused on assessment, provision of time-limited services (typically 1-4 appointments), and triage to specialty care if needed. Training in the GEM clinic strives to enhance fellows' abilities to deliver evidence-based cognitive assessments and other services to older veterans with an integrated team approach.

Clinical supervision is provided by two clinical psychologists from the Buffalo VA Medical Center:

- Sheila M. Donovan, PhD: Dr. Donovan is a licensed psychologist at the VA Western New York Healthcare System. She serves as the local Primary-Care Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) coordinator and clinical point of contact for LGBTQ Veterans and victims of

domestic violence. She is also the Assistant Training Director for the VA Western New York's Pre-Doctoral Psychology Internship. Dr. Donovan is the primary clinical supervisor for Fellows in the PC-MHI clinical rotation.

- Anna G. Kusche, PhD: Dr. Kusche is a licensed psychologist at the VA Western New York Healthcare System, with clinical roles in Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) and Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC). Dr. Kusche is the primary clinical supervisor for Fellows in the GEM clinical rotation.

Sample 2-Yr Training Goals

Year 1: Research:

- Participate in monthly research meetings, gain exposure to grant applications and structure
- Collaborate with research mentor on mentor's project(s)
- Begin to develop individual research goals
- Prepare first IRB application and begin collecting data
- Collaborate on one clinical database study
- Prepare an outline for a review paper
- Submit at least one manuscript for publication
- Prepare pilot grant proposal

Year 1: Clinical:

- Shadow primary care and behavioral health providers
- Become familiar with PC-MHI literature, brief assessments, and clinical practices
- Become familiar with interdisciplinary team-based assessment and intervention

Year 1: Professional Development:

- Prepare and revise a biosketch, teaching philosophy, and research statement
- Prepare for EPPP
- Lead CIH/GEM clinic practicum student didactic series
- Consider application for VA Psychology Training Council's Multicultural Diversity Committee
- Attend at least one scientific conference such as Collaborative Family Healthcare Association Conference or a VA research conference
- Participate in National Peer Network for Trainees in VA PC-MHI

Year 2 Research:

- Participate in monthly research meetings
- Attend & present at one scientific conference such as Collaborative Family Healthcare Association Conference or a VA research conference
- Complete pilot grant or other independent research study
- Complete review paper
- Submit at least one data-based manuscript for publication
- Prepare application for a mentored VA Career Development Award

Year 2 Clinical:

- Refine PC-MHI clinical practice skills

Year 2 Professional Development:

- Complete EPPP and prepare for psychology licensure
- Contribute to CIH/GEM clinic practicum student didactic series

- Contribute to VAWNY psychology intern seminar
- Consider application for VA Psychology Training Council's Multicultural Diversity Committee
- Search for, select, and secure full-time employment, preferably with the Department of Veterans Affairs

Training Faculty

Fellowship Director:

- Laura O. Wray, PhD

Fellowship Associate Director:

- Paul R. King, PhD

Research Faculty:

- Gregory P. Beehler, PhD, MA
- Jennifer S. Funderburk, PhD
- Stephen A. Maisto, PhD
- Wilfred R. Pigeon, PhD
- Kyle Possemato, PhD

Biostatistician:

- Michael Wade, MS

Clinical Supervisors:

- Sheila M. Donovan, PhD
- Anna G. Kusche, PhD

Other Contributors:

- Joseph Ditre, PhD

Eligibility & Application

Prospective applicants must be U.S. Citizens, and have completed doctoral degree requirements from an APA-accredited program in clinical or counseling psychology, and an APA-accredited pre-doctoral psychology internship.

The Center for Integrated Healthcare is committed to seeking and sustaining a culturally and ethnically diverse work environment. The training program adheres to, and makes available to all interested parties, formal written policies and procedures that govern resident selection, internship and academic preparation requirements, administration and financial assistance, resident performance evaluation and feedback, advisement, retention, termination, due process and grievance redress for residents and training supervisors. The training program complies with other VA policies and procedures that pertain to supervisors' and residents' rights, responsibilities, and personal development. The United States Government does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factor.

To apply submit the following materials by e-mail (where possible) to Dr. Paul King, Associate Director of Fellowship Training:

- Detailed curriculum vitae describing background training and experience, description of internship, and other scholarly activity and research.
- Three letters of recommendation sent directly from previous supervisors. One letter must be from the Director of Training of your APA-accredited pre-doctoral internship. E-mailed letters are acceptable until signed letters arrive.
- Official graduate transcript sent directly by your university. Unofficial Transcripts are acceptable until official transcripts arrive.
- Writing Samples. Please send a scholarly work sample and clinical case report.

- Cover Letter/Letter of Intent. The letter should clearly describe how your career goals and interests are aligned with the fellowship training opportunities.

Applications for the upcoming training year are typically due by December 15, with selection anticipated during the third week of February. Additional instructions and our current recruitment flyer are available for download here. CIH Fellowship Advertisement

Points of Contact:

Laura O. Wray, PhD

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Advanced MIRECC/CoE Fellowship Homepage

For more details, please visit the Advanced MIRECC/CoE Fellowship Website