



VISN 3 Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC)

Mission Statement

At the VISN 3 MIRECC, the focus is on maximizing recovery for veterans with *Serious Mental Illnesses* (SMI) by bringing research into practice. Our aim, to reveal the causes and most effective treatments of serious mental illnesses, is accomplished through collaborations between four core domains: research, education, clinical interventions, and evaluation.

The objectives of VISN 3 MIRECC are attained via the following:

- An evaluation infrastructure to support the research, education, and clinical programs within the VA NY/NJ Veterans Healthcare Network.
- Conducting research on the diagnosis and treatment of serious mental illness. This spans the spectrum from basic science to applied services research, and includes biological, psychological, social, and systems research.
- Implementing research-based, state-of-the-art clinical interventions for veterans with serious mental illness.
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of the educational interventions that improve the treatment of veterans with serious mental illness.

Recovery implementation has become a longstanding partnership between the Mental Health Care Line (MHCL) of VISN 3 and the VISN 3 MIRECC. It originated in 2005 as a partnership between the Mental Health Executive Board (MHEB), the MIRECC, and the Veteran’s Advisory Council. Soon after, we were joined by the Local Recovery Coordinators (LRCs). Our implementation model is based upon a needs assessment done in conjunction with the MHEB and MHCL. This involves both the evidence-base, the need to implement the USP, and the values we attach to treatment principles and modalities.

In order to best meet the needs of the MHCL, our MIRECC’s ongoing efforts to maximize recovery for veterans has evolved over time to encompass specific evidence-based practices that support recovery-oriented services. These projects have been wide-ranging in research target and scope. Our latest recovery-oriented initiatives are delineated below.

Selected Studies and Projects:

- High Risk Suicidal Behavior in Veterans-Assessment of Predictors and Efficacy of DBT – This is a newly funded grant from the Department of Defense that involves a baseline assessment of OEF/OIF Veterans who have been recently hospitalized on a psychiatric inpatient unit at JJP VAMC, comparing those on the clinically identified “high risk” (HR) suicide list to those with no history of suicidal behavior “low risk” (LR). “High risk” subjects are then randomized to 6 months of DBT or treatment at usual and monitored for 18 months in terms of suicidal behavior and ideation, as well as other clinical parameters. Symptoms that put veterans at high risk for suicidal behavior are being examined.
- Serotonin Receptor 2C RNA Editing – Serotonin has long been implicated in behavioral dysinhibition, e.g. impulsive aggression, emotion regulation and suicide. There are many receptor subtypes for serotonin.

Serotonin receptor 2C RNA editing is increased in the brains of suicide victims. A MIRECC funded pilot study has been supporting the assessment of a new and much more accurate technique to study RNA editing.

- CBT for Psychosis – VISN-wide training on CBT for Psychosis was developed for staff. The curriculum involved 36 hours of coursework, 26 weekly Coaching Sessions (small groups), and follow-up conferences and consultations. We plan to evaluate outcomes of the CBT treatment in veterans both in terms of symptoms of psychosis and functional outcome, the success of implementation, the type of coaching and supervision that leads to effective implementation and the relationship of successful implementation to internal, external, and no facilitation.
- Family Psychoeducation & Family Adaptation for OEF/OIF Veterans – Evidence-based family psychoeducation interventions provide critical ways to improve the health and well-being of both veterans and family members. This study explores the efficacy of multifamily group therapy in helping Veterans and
- Improving the Functional Outcomes in the Schizophrenia Spectrum – This is a cognitive remediation treatment (CRT) program that was developed for individuals with schizophrenia and schizotypal personality disorder to improve both cognitive functioning and functional skills.
- Translational Bench Research – This research examines abnormalities in myelination and its effects in schizophrenia. There are abnormalities in replication and proliferation cells responsible for myelination that exist in schizophrenia suggesting that therapeutic approaches that take advantage of what has been learned in cancer chemotherapy may have a place in translational therapeutics for schizophrenia.
- Translational & Bench Research II – This research seeks to elucidate the neurobiological underpinnings of serious mental illness, in particular, the effects of oligodendrocyte deficiencies in several regions of the brain in schizophrenia, with the aim of identifying targets to enhance clinical interventions.
- Online Support for OEF/OIF Veterans with mTBI – As younger Veterans have frequently turned to online support networks, this pilot study will be examining preferences among OEF/OIF Veterans with mild TBI regarding online support to determine how best to configure online support sites that will better facilitate recovery.
- Monitoring the Implementation of the Suicide Risk Assessment (SRA) Template – This study assesses the extent to which standardization of suicide assessment through the implementation of the SRA template has contributed to the reliable and valid assessment of suicidality and the management and reduction of suicide risk.

Selected Publications (2010):

Byne, W, Kerns, D & Novakovic, V (in press). White matter and oligodendrocyte abnormalities in bipolar disorder. US Psychiatry.

Goodman, M, **New, AS**, Triebwasser, J, Collins, KA & **Siever, LJ** (in press). Phenotype, endophenotype and genotype comparisons between borderline personality disorder and major depressive disorder. J Personality Disorders.

Goodman, M, Patil, U, Triebwasser, J, Diamond, E, Hiller, A, Hoffman, P, Goldberg, S, Koenigsberg, HW, **Siever, LJ & New, AS** (in press). Parental viewpoints of trajectories to borderline personality disorder in female offspring. J Personality Disorders.

Kerns, D, Vong, GS, Barley, KA, **Dracheva, S**, Katsel, P, Casaccia, P, **Haroutunian, V & Bynne, W** (in press). Gene expression abnormalities and oligodendrocyte deficit in the internal capsule in schizophrenia.

Kristiansen, LV, Patel, SA, **Haroutunian, V** & Meador-Woodruff, J H (2010). Expression of the NR2B-NMDA receptor subunit and its Tbr-1/CINAP regulatory proteins in postmortem brain suggest altered receptor processing in schizophrenia. Synapse **64**: 495-502.

- McClure, MM**, Harvey, PD, Goodman, M, Triebwasser, J, **New, A**, Koenigsberg, HW, Sprung, L J, Flory, JD & **Siever, LJ** (2010). Pergolide treatment of cognitive deficits associated with schizotypal personality disorder: Continued evidence of the importance of the dopamine system in the schizophrenia spectrum. *Neuropsychopharmacol* Feb 3. [Epub ahead of print].
- Mezzich, JE** (2010, January 29). World Psychiatric Association perspectives on person-centered psychiatry and medicine. Retrieved March 16, 2010, from the International Journal of Integrated Healthcare website: <http://www.ijic.org/index.php/ijic/article/view/472/942>.
- Mezzich, JE** (in press). Preface to cultures and medicine. In A. Pakaslahti & M. Huttunen (Eds.), *Cultures and medicine*. Helsinki, Finland: Duodecim.
- Mezzich, JE**, Snaedal, J, van Weel, C & Heath, I (2010, January 27). Introduction to conceptual explorations on person-centered medicine. Retrieved March 16, 2010, from the International Journal of Integrated Healthcare website: <http://www.ijic.org/index.php/ijic/article/viewFile/472/943>.
- Perlick, DA**, Rosenheck, RA, Kaczynski, R, Swartz, MS, Canive, JM & Lieberman, JA (2010). Impact of antipsychotic medication on family burden in schizophrenia: longitudinal results of CATIE trial. *Schizophr Res* **116**(2-3): 118-125.
- Radu, A, Hristescu, G, Katsel, P, **Haroutunian, V** & Davis, KL (2010). Microarray database mining and cell differentiation defects in schizophrenia. In *Software Tools and Algorithms for Biological Systems- Accepted*
- Rapp, MA, Schnaider-Beeri, M, Purohit, DP, Reichenberg, A, McGurk, S, **Haroutunian, V** et al. (2010). Cortical neuritic plaques and hippocampal neurofibrillary tangles are related to dementia severity in elderly schizophrenia patients. *Schizophr Res* **116**: 90-96.
- Segal, D, Haznedar, MM, **Hazlett, EA**, Entis, JJ, Newmark, RE, Torosjan, Y, Schneiderman, JS, Friedman, J, Chu, KW, Tang, CY, Buchsbaum, MS & Hof, PR (2010). Diffusion tensor anisotropy in the cingulate gyrus in schizophrenia. *Neuroimage* **50**: 357-365.
- Stanley, B & **Siever, LJ** (2010). The interpersonal dimension of borderline personality disorder: Toward a neuropeptide model. *Am J Psychiatry* **167**(1): 24-39.
- Zhang, J, Mitsis, EM, Chu, K, Newmark, RE, **Hazlett, EA** & Buchsbaum, MS (2010). SPM and cluster counting analysis of 18F FDG-PET imaging in traumatic brain injury. *J Neurotrauma* **27**: 35-49. [Epub ahead of print].

Leadership

Director – Larry J. Siever, M.D.

Associate Director of Education – Bruce Levine, M.D.

Associate Director of Translational Research – Vahram Haroutunian, Ph.D.

Associate Director of Clinical/Evidence-Based Research – Antonia New, M.D.

Associate Clinical Director of Clinical/Evidence-Based Research – Miklos Losonczy, M.D., Ph.D.

Associate Director of Best Practices/Health Sciences Research – Marjorie F. Goldstein, Ph.D.

Administrative Officer – Mark Levinson, M.S.H.A.

Contact

New York/New Jersey MIRECC
 James J Peters VA Medical Center
 130 W. Kingsbridge Road
 OOMH
 Suite 6A-44
 Bronx, NY 10468
 (718) 584-9000, extension 5227