VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network

VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC
Post Deployment Mental Health

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Focus on the VISN

National Service

Dr. Fairbank presented an overview of our MIRECC's activities at a June meeting of the Institute of Medicine Committee to Evaluate the Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services. **Dr. Hurley** participated in the National Advisory Board meeting for the Auditory and Vestibular Dysfunction Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) in June.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

The Durham MIRECC site hosted a two day intensive Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). **Dr. Cindy Swinkels,** site-lead for *Coaching Into Care* (VA's national family call line), made arrangements to bring ASIST trainers to Durham, where the call center is located. The ASIST workshop is an evidence-based, "suicide first-aid" course designed to increase comfort around discussing and preventing suicide.

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Integrated Care Smoking Cessation for Homeless Veterans Learning Collaborative

In Spring 2014, **Drs. Jean Beckham** and **Pat Calhoun** received VA Central Office funding to partner with Duke's Evidence-based Practice Implementation Center (EPIC) on a project designed to adapt and implement integrated care smoking cessation for homeless Veterans. The project uses a Learning Collaborative model to engage multiple homeless programs at VA Medical Centers within VISN 6, including Asheville, Beckley, Durham, Fayetteville, Hampton, Salem, and Salisbury.

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VA National Research Week Activities

Dr. Michelle Rissling (Durham MIRECC Fellow) tied for first place in Durham VAMC's Institute for Medical Research 2014 Poster Contest!

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Recently Approved Grants

Jean Beckham (PI) *Abstinence Reinforcement Therapy (ART) for Homeless Veteran Smokers.* VA RR&D Merit Review Award

Elizabeth Van Voorhees (PI) *Group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anger and Aggression in Veterans with PTSD.* VA RR&D Career Development Award (5 years)

Education Update

Each issue of this news brief from the Education Components for the VA's Mental Health Centers of Excellence has a different topic focus. This time it is peer support.

www.mirecc.va.gov/newsletter/current.asp

Approved Research Sites & Contacts:

Durham VA
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Focus on the VISN

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

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The thirty attendees at the Durham training included participants from Durham VA (Peer Support Specialists, Suicide Prevention Team members, Coaching Into Care staff, MIRECC research staff), Hampton VA (MIRECC research staff), an employee from the Department of Health and Human Services, and students and staff from the Duke Psychiatry program. They join the more than one million participants worldwide who have completed the training.

This training proved interactive, practical, and practice-oriented. Initially, individuals within smaller groups discussed personal attitudes and reactions towards suicide, then transitioned into recognizing signs when someone might be at risk of suicide. The remainder of the training involved roleplaying suicide intervention scenarios utilizing the Pathway for Assisting Life (PAL) model. The PAL model entails building rapport with a person-at-risk, asking directly about suicide, and hearing their story. Then together, the helper and the person-at-risk identify a reason for living, shift thinking towards safety, and develop a safety plan. After plan development, the helper confirms action items with the individual to encourage follow through.

Participants were encouraged to use the PAL model in both work and personal arenas in which they encounter a person-at-risk. Many attendees expressed higher comfort levels around addressing suicidality, and a greater willingness to intervene.

Journal Articles

Allen JP,Nieuwsma JA, Pollitt MJ, Blazer D. *Recovery on higher ground: Spirituality in Treatment of Addictive Disorders.* Current Psychiatry. 2014;13: 24-40.

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Durham MIRECC personnel Mira Brancu, Eric Crawford, Mary Pender and Unber Ahmad (pictured on left) participated in the recent national Women Veterans Health Summit. Dr. Brancu received a letter from Mr. Hoffman, VISN 6 Network Director, expressing his appreciation for their efforts in support of the event.

Focus on the VISN

VA National Research Week Activities

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Poster presenters were judged on how well they were able to relate their research to the general public. Her research poster was *The Relationship Between Subjective Sleep Duration, Anger and Aggressive Impulses in PTSD*. Co-authors included MIRECC personnel (**Cindy Swinkels, Eric Elbogen, Patrick Calhoun**) and Durham VAMC trainees (Jennifer O'Brien, Jamie Hughes). The prize was $1,000 in funding to support Michelle's research into the association of sleep disorders to poor outcome in individuals with PTSD.

MIRECC personnel (**Scott McDonald, Treven Pickett, Robin Lumpkin, Christina Sheerin, Lillian Stevens**) hosted a table at the Richmond VAMC's annual Research Day. In addition to offering an opportunity for Veterans to volunteer for MIRECC research projects, they handed out information on local and national VA clinical services as well as resources offered by the OEF/OIF/OND Team.

South Central MIRECC

CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Each CBOC MH Rounds presentation is now offered twice a month.

Wednesday July 9 from 9-10 am ET
Thursday July 10 from 12-1 pm ET

Addressing Pain: A Primer for Mental Health Providers

You must register in TMS for these sessions in advance to receive credit.

August 13 & 14	***Veterans' Justice Program***
Sept 10 & 11	***Evaluation of Cognitive Complaints in a Clinical Setting***
Oct 8 & 9	***Obstructive Sleep Apnea***

Contact Ashley McDaniel with any questions:
ashley.mcdaniel@va.gov or 501-257-1223

Invited Lectures

Dr. Mira Brancu (Managing Director, MIRECC OEF/OIF/OND Registry) and Dr. Richard Ogle presented a workshop *The ACT of Self-Care: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) Approach to the Ethical Principle of Psychologist Self-Care* at the North Carolina Psychology Association Continuing Education Institutes & Spring Conference, April 25-26, 2014, Charlotte NC.

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Resources for Building Resiliency

MOVING FORWARD
OVERCOMING LIFE'S CHALLENGES

www.StartMovingForward.org

The VA and DoD partnered to develop a free and anonymous on-line education and life coaching program that uses interactive exercises and video demonstrations to teach skills for overcoming life challenges such as relationship problems, financial hardship, and re-adjustment issues.

Meeting Presentations

ADAA ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

March 27 - 30 2014, Chicago IL

Kimbrel NA, Calhoun PS, Elbogen EB, Brancu M, MIRECC Registry Workgroup, Beckham JC. *The relationship between psychiatric comorbidity and violence, incarceration, suicide attempts, and suicidality among Iraq and Afghanistan era veterans.*

Kimbrel NA, Calhoun PS, Elbogen EB, Brancu M, MIRECC Registry Workgroup, Beckham JC. *The factor structure of psychiatric comorbidity among Iraq/Afghanistan-era veterans and its relationship to violence, incarceration, suicide attempts, and suicidality.*

38TH ANNUAL BRAIN INJURY REHABILITATION CONFERENCE

April 15 - 17, 2014, Williamsburg, VA.

Stevens LF. *Parenting After TBI: Review of Issues and Novel Intervention for Military Families.*

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MIRECC Research Featured!

PSYCHIATRIC NEWS alert
The Voice of the American Psychiatric Association and the Psychiatric Community

Brief Screening Tool Uses Five Questions to Identify Violence Risk Among Veterans

The stresses of military deployment and combat have raised concerns about the risk of violence among a subset of returning troops. Now a new evidence-based screening tool can help identify candidates for a more comprehensive assessment of risk and protective factors, writes **Eric Elbogen**, PhD (associate professor of psychiatry at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine) and colleagues in AJP in Advance.

Elbogen EB, Cueva M, Wagner HR, Sreenivasan S, Brancu M, Beckham JC, Van Male L. *Screening for Violence Risk in Military Veterans: Predictive Validity of a Brief Clinical Tool.* American Journal of Psychiatry. 2014; [Epub ahead of print]

Focus on the VISN

Integrated Care Smoking Cessation for Homeless Veterans Learning Collaborative

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The Learning Collaborative approach is team-based, and combines clinical training and skill building with sharing, testing and spreading of implementation strategies and creative solutions. The project has received incredible support from local and national experts in smoking cessation and homelessness, including VISN6 Homeless Coordinator Jeff Doyle.

Local project leader and MIRECC staff member **Angela Kirby** has worked with EPIC staff members to develop and provide training for homeless program clinicians and prescribers. In April, Durham VA and MIRECC staff members, including **Eric Dedert, Jennifer Runnals, Vickie Carpenter, Emily Gentes**, and **Michelle Rissling**, were primary clinical faculty in a two-day local training session for nearly forty care providers from across the VISN. Since that training, care providers have attended bi-weekly clinical calls in which issues related to clinical competence, organizational challenges, and veteran engagement have been discussed. Since that training, providers in VISN homeless programs have begun to provide best practice smoking cessation treatment to homeless Veterans who wish to quit smoking.

Learning Collaborative personnel (L to R) EPIC staff members Grahme Smith, Caren Swanson, and Karen Goetz, Durham VA study coordinator Vickie Carpenter, and MIRECC staff member Angela Kirby.

In June, MIRECC and EPIC staff provided an all-day virtual learning session in which homeless program staff participated in a Veteran panel discussion, received training in Motivational Interviewing, and participated in a panel discussion with national VA smoking cessation experts. Next steps in the Learning Collaborative include continued bi-weekly clinical calls and site visits by EPIC and MIRECC staff to help teams troubleshoot implementation and engagement barriers. The Learning Collaborative series will culminate in a two-day learning session designed to enhance continued implementation of smoking cessation with homeless Veterans.

Clinical Update

This article from 2011 is still in the "top 10"!

Kudler H, Straits-Tröster K, Brancu M. *Initiatives to improve access to behavioral health services in the Veterans Affairs Health System.* North Carolina Medical Journal; 2011;72(1):40-2.

Program Update

Engaging Chaplains in MH Care

This project is funded by Central Office and housed within our MIRECC. **Dr. Keith Meador** directs the initiative, and **Dr. Jason Nieuwsma** serves as associate director.

Kickoff events for two major projects have been held in the past few months:

Mental Health and Chaplaincy Learning Collaborative

Teams are from all over the country and from all branches of the military! Seven VA teams (chaplain, mental health provider, and systems redesign coach) attended the face-to-face kickoff in Hampton, VA on April 8-9. Seven DOD teams attended a virtual kickoff on June 3-4.

Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS)

The 20 VA and 20 DOD chaplains who will be completing this year-long mental health certification training program attended the event, May 21-23 in Hampton, VA. MHICS relies heavily on distance education using online approaches such as Blackboard and Adobe Connect. It includes 3 face-to-face events over the course of the year.

MIRECC Research Featured!

U.S. MEDICINE
THE VOICE OF FEDERAL MEDICINE
DIRECT
U.S. MEDICINE NEWS UPDATE
June ISSUE

Major Depressive Disorder Has Affected Nearly Half of Female OIF/OEF Veterans

... **John Curry**, PhD, and his colleagues at the VA Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) analyzed data from 1,700 veterans who had served during the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. ... The researchers found nearly half of the women (46.5%) and slightly more than one-third of men (36.3%) experienced major depressive disorder during their lifetimes (MDD-L).

Curry JF, Aubuchon-Endsley N, Brancu M, Runnals JJ, VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Women Veterans Research Workgroup, VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Registry Workgroup, Fairbank JA. *Lifetime major depression and comorbid disorders among current-era women veterans.* Journal of Affective Disorders. 2014; 152-154: 434-40.

Journal Articles

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Brancu M, Thompson NL, Beckham JC, Green KT, Calhoun PS, Elbogen EB, Robbins AT, Fairbank JA; VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Registry Workgroup, Wagner HR. *The impact of social support on psychological distress for U.S. Afghanistan/Iraq era veterans with PTSD and other psychiatric disorders.* Psychiatry Research. 2014; 217 (1-2): 86-92.

Bulling D, DeKraai MB, Abdel Monem T, Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell W, Ethridge K, Meador KG. *Confidentiality and mental health/chaplain collaboration.* Military Psychology. 2014; 25: 557-567.

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Invited Lectures

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Dr. John Fairbank (MIRECC Director) presented *VA Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRCC): Overview of Activities Relevant to Mental Health Services for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans* at a June meeting of the Institute of Medicine Committee to Evaluate the Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services.

Dr. Robin Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented *Making a Difference: Research in a small VAMC can change lives* as part of the Charles George VAMC Making a Difference research retreat, May 20 2014, Asheville, NC. Dr. Hurley also presented *Mental Health Implications for the Blast-exposed Patient* as part of the Audiology Online Webinar *Auditory Assessement of the Blast-exposed Patient* in June. This webinar was presented in partnership with the Defense Hearing Center of Excellence.

Meador KG, Nieuwsma JA. *Expanding the role of chaplains.* Invited talk presented at the VA Mental Health Showcase, May 2014, Washington, DC.

Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell W. *Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT): Building evidence-based skills to enhance professional chaplaincy.* Half-day workshop presented at the Association of Professional Chaplains Annual Conference, June 2014, Anaheim CA.

MIRECC Faculty Honored

Dr. Mira Brancu (far left) and her seven Colleague Assistance Committee (CAC) co-members received the North Carolina Psychology Association (NCPA) President's Award for their work on psychologist self-care, wellness, and impairment intervention education and outreach. The CAC is charged with developing education, peer consulation, and other resources to facilitate the optimal functioning of psychologists in North Carolina. They have offered workshops and written articles on a variety of topics related to prevention and amelioration of profession distress and impairment including peer consultation, compassion fatigue, workplace safety, and managing difficult conversations with colleagues. The CAC also offers a 24-hour helpline service for psychologists. Dr. Brancu joined the CAC shortly after it was formed in 2007.

Journal Articles

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Dennis PA, Ulmer CS, Calhoun PS, Sherwood A, Watkins LL, Dennis MF, Beckham JC. *Behavioral health mediators of the link between posttraumatic stress disorder and dyslipidemia.* Journal of Psychosomatic Research. 2014 Jul;77(1):45-50.

Elbogen EB, Johnson SC, Newton VM, Timko C, Vasterling JJ, Van Male LM, Wagner HR, Beckham JC. *Protective Mechanisms and Prevention of Violence and Aggression in Veterans.* Psychological Services. 2014; 11(2) :220-228.

Elbogen EB, Johnson SC, Wagner HR, Sullivan C, Taft CT, Beckham JC. *Violent behaviour and post-traumatic stress disorder in US Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.* British Journal of Psychiatry. 2014; 204:368-375.

Green KT, Hayward LC, Williams AM, Bryan BC, Taber KH, VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Workgroup, Davidson JR, Beckham JC, Calhoun PS. *Examining the Factor Structure of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) in a Post 9/11 U.S. Military Veteran Sample.* Assessment 2014; 21(4):443-451.

Gierisch JM, Nieuwsma JA, Bradford DW, Wilder CM, Mann-Wrobel MC, McBroom AJ, Wing L, Musty MD, Chobot MM, Hasselblad V, Williams JWJr. *Pharmacological and behavioral interventions to improve cardiovascular risk factors in people with serious mental illness: A systematic review and meta-analysis.* Journal of Clinical Psychiatry. 2014; 75 (5): e424-440.

Hall KS, Beckham JC, Bosworth HB, Sloane R, Pieper CF, Morey MC. *PTSD is negatively associated with physical performance and physical function in older overweight military veterans.* Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development. 2014; 51 (2): 285-296.

Kudler H. *Commentary: Helping clinicians who care for trauma survivors.* Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants. 2014; 27(5):12-3.

Lamar CD, Hurley RA, Rowland JA, Taber KH. *Post-traumatic epilepsy: review of risks, pathophysiology, and potential biomarkers.* Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience. 2014; 26(2) :iv-113.

Li W, Wu B, Batrachenko A, Bancroft-Wu, V, Morey RA, Shashi V, Langkammer C, De Bellis MD, Ropele S, Song AW, Liu C. *Differential developmental trajectories of magnetic susceptibility in human brain gray and white matter over the lifespan.* Human Brain Mapping. 2014; 35(6):2698-713

Sripada RK, Welsh RC, Marx CE, Liberzon I. *The neurosteroids allopregnanolone and dehydroepiandrosterone modulate resting-state amygdala connectivity.* Human Brain Mapping. 2014; 35(7): 3249-3261.

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Visit our web site for more resources
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6.asp

Meeting Presentations

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SOCIETY FOR THE
PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY
division 36

12th Annual Mid-Year Conference on Religion and Spirituality
April 25 – 26, 2014

Drescher KD, Currier JM, Nieuwsma JA. *Chaplain views of suffering and professional quality of Life. In Trauma and Spirituality.* **Symposium**

VIRGINIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
Spring Convention & Educational Conference
April 23 - 25 2014, Norfolk VA

Erickson HJ. *What Do We Know About Recovery from PTSD? Contributions for Neuroimaging.*

Stevens LF, Hinesley J. *Parenting Among Military Families and The Circle of Security Intervention®.*

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL CHAPLAINS
APC Annual Conference
June 18 - 22 2014, Anaheim CA

Fitchett G, Nieuwsma JA, Meador KG. *Evidence-based chaplaincy care: Attitudes and practices in diverse healthcare chaplain samples.*

Annual Research Meeting
June 8-10, 2014 | San Diego Convention Center | San Diego
AcademyHealth

Jackson GL, Fortune-Greeley AK, Gierisch JM, Datta SK, Stolldorf DP, Cantrell WC, Ethridge AK, Angel C, Millspaugh D, Bauch SL, Nieuwsma JA. *Implementing the Warrior to Soul Mate Program: A partnered evaluation to assess sustainability of a program for enhancing veterans' intimate relationships.*

Journal Articles

Szabo ST, Kilts JD, Naylor JC, Youssef NA, Strauss JL, Morey RA, Brancu M, Hamer RM, Bradford DW; VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Work Group, Marx CE. *Amino acids as biomarker candidates for suicidality in male OEF/OIF veterans: Relevance to NMDA receptor modulation and nitric oxide signaling.* Military Medicine, 179 (5): 486-491.

Van Voorhees EE, Hamlett-Berry K, Christofferson D, Beckham JC, Nieuwsma JA. *No wrong door to smoking cessation care: A Veterans Affairs chaplain survey.* Military Medicine. 2014; 179 (5): 472-476.

Volz AR, Dennis PA, Dennis MF, Calhoun PS, Wilson SM, Beckham JC. *The role of daily hassles and distress tolerance in predicting cigarette craving during a quit attempt.* Nicotine and Tobacco Research. 2014; 16 (6): 872-875.

Wilson SM, Dedert EA, Dennis PA, Dennis MF, Calhoun PS, Kirby AC, Beckham JC. *Do ethnicity and gender moderate the influence of posttraumatic stress disorder on time to smoking lapse?* Addictive Behaviors. 2014; 39 (7): 1163-1167.

★Free★ Web Courses for Providers

Treating the Invisible Wounds of War **www.ahecconnect.com/citizensoldier**

Click on **New Users** to register. You will then see the available web courses listed:

1 - ***Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (english & spanish editions)***
2 - ***A Primary Care Approach***
3 - ***Issues of Women Returning from Combat***
4 - ***Recognizing the Signs of mTBI during Routine Eye Examinations***
5 - ***Understanding Military Family Issues***

These courses were developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC). They are designed to help primary care physicians, case workers, mental health providers - who may see a veteran or family member on an unrelated issue - develop a better understanding of the culture in which veterans and their families live and work, and provide best practices for identifying, assessing and treating mental health problems that result from the trauma of war.

Educational Resources from the
TBI Model Systems Carolinas Site

Heads Up - *An Ounce of Prevention*
Heads Up - *Fatigue*
Heads Up - *Irritability*
Heads Up - *Plans for the Future*
Heads Up - *Wake Up Call (Sleep Disturbances after TBI)*

http://www.carolinashealthcare.org/carolinas-rehab-heads-up-educational-resources

Visit our web site for more resources **http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6.asp**