



VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Post Deployment Mental Health

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VISN 6 Leadership

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Director's Update: Welcome to new Deputy Director



The VISN 6 MIRECC's national search for a Deputy Director has concluded successfully. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Mira Brancu accepted the Deputy Director position, officially transitioning on March 22. Mira is working with me and others within the MIRECC to implement a



phased and thoughtful transition from her previous responsibilities as Managing Director of the OEF/OIF/OND Post-Deployment Mental Health Study, Data Warehouse and Biorepository. Please join me in congratulating and thanking Mira for taking on this new role in service to the mission of the VISN 6 MIRECC to improve the post-deployment mental health of our Nation's Veterans.

John A. Fairbank, Ph.D. Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC

Focus on the VISN

Study featured by MH Services in a Cabinet Report!

When it first launched its mission to identify, promote and study best practices in deployment mental health, the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 6 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC) team decided to ask Veterans what they wanted from VA rather than tell them what the experts thought they needed. The April 2015 edition of the Journal of Traumatic Stress will include a scientific report on a VISN 6 MIRECC survey of Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan who were users or non-users of mental health services within VA or community systems and who also reported significant symptoms of PTSD. The goal was to learn what these Veterans most wanted from VA and to understand any concerns that might keep them from seeking care.

continued on page 2

MIRECC Activities Support VHA Blueprint for Excellence

Strategy 2: Deliver high quality, Veteran centered care that compares favorably to the best of private sector in measured outcomes, value, access and patient experience.

★Coaching into Care★

Providing education and support to empower family members/friends of Veterans to get them into care.

★Online Parenting Course★

Serving Veterans through web-based mental health services.

★ HOME Project★

Serving at-risk Veterans at home and in rural areas.

★Developing Case Finders★

Identify at-risk Veterans who may not present through other VA outreach efforts and care delivery

★ Mobile Technologies★

Serving homeless, rural & returning Veterans to improve their mental health and reduce health risks

★National MH & Chaplaincy Program★

Serving Veterans through partnership between chaplains and mental health providers.

★Veteran Health & Needs Assessment★

Serving OEF/OIF/OND Veterans by identifying treatment preferences and barriers to care

★ Practice Based Implementation★

Serving Veterans by identifying facilitators to mental health practice changes

★ MH Summits - VISN 6 & National★

Serving Veterans through partnerships with community agencies and providers in support of VISN 6 MH Summits and leading national evaluations of MH Summits to provide guidance for national policy

continued on page 3

Recently Approved Grants

Katherine Taber (PI) *Structural & Functional Neurobiology of Veterans Exposed to Primary Blast Forces.* VA/DOD Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium

Approved Research Sites & Contacts:

Durham VA
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Study featured by MHS in a Cabinet Report!

continued from page 1

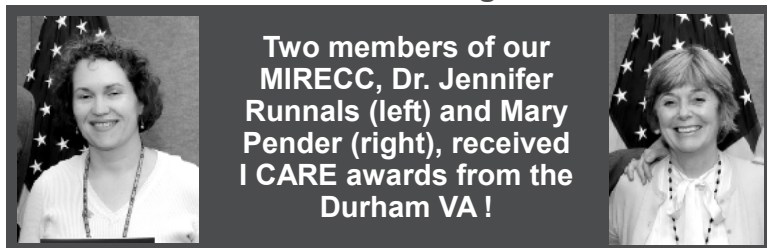
Veterans reported concerns about the kind of PTSD treatment they might receive at VA and about the stigma associated with reporting a mental health problem, but an important study finding was that the primary reason why Veterans with significant symptoms of PTSD chose not to seek mental health care was their concern about the privacy of their medical record.

When asked what they most wanted from VA, their top choice (endorsed by 91.0% of participants) was for assistance with their VA benefits. This finding supports plans for the new MyVA program designed to ensure that every Veteran can engage all aspects of VA service (healthcare, benefits and cemetery services) at any VA point of contact. Those Veterans who were already engaged in mental health care reported a strong desire for family services and for help with particular PTSD symptoms. Severity of PTSD symptoms drove help-seeking and many participants communicated preferences for care that would address physical problems as well. This supports VA's efforts to address mental health issues in Primary Care settings where Veterans can be engaged on both levels without having to make a special "Mental Health" appointment (thus side-stepping any associated stigma).

Based on these findings, the authors suggest that VA undertake a novel outreach/education program addressing existing privacy protections, benefits questions, treatment options and family services in order to best engage Veterans with PTSD symptoms who served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Crawford EF, Elbogen EB, Wagner HR, Kudler H, Calhoun PS, Brancu M, Straits-Troster KA. *Surveying Treatment Preferences in Iraq-Afghanistan Veterans with PTSD Symptoms: A Step Toward Veteran-Centered Care.* Journal of Traumatic Stress. 2015; 28(2): 118-126.

VA Awards & Recognition



Two members of our MIRECC, Dr. Jennifer Runnals (left) and Mary Pender (right), received I CARE awards from the Durham VA!

Invited Lectures

Dr. Mira Brancu (MIRECC Deputy Director) and Juanita Hill presented *Developing Lifelong Resilience - Personal, Professional and Team-Level Strategies* as part of the VA/DOD/USPHS Social Work Training online series April 8, 2015.

Dr. John Curry (MIRECC Family Studies) and Alyssa Elliot presented *Family Issues and Veteran Reintegration* as part of the Center for Deployment Psychology webinar series April 9, 2015.

continued on page 3

Leadership Activities

Two of our faculty have accepted invitations to serve on their VA's R&D committee. **Dr. John Fairbank** (MIRECC Director) is joining the Durham R&D committee and **Dr. Scott McDonald** (MIRECC Fellowship Director, Richmond) is joining the Richmond R&D committee.

Dr. McDonald also now serves on the VA/DoD Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) for the Management of Concussion-Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Work Group and the APA Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) Science Committee.

Dr. Rajendra Morey (MIRECC Neuroimaging) has been appointed to lead the Neuroimaging Workgroup within the Psychiatric Genetics Consortium for PTSD. This Consortium has brought together over 35,000 samples from across the world to conduct a PTSD genome-wide association study (GWAS). Within this larger effort, Dr. Morey has organized the neuroimaging-genetics group. This now includes 12 sites with over 4,500 datasets, the largest neuroimaging-genetics effort in PTSD to date.

MIRECC Faculty Honored

Dr. Jean Beckham (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research) has been awarded Duke University School of Medicine's Research Mentoring Award. She was nominated by a group of past and current mentees across VA and academic institutions, all of whom wrote glowing letters of nomination. She is an amazing mentor, and it's wonderful that her contributions to future generations of researchers are being acknowledged!



Meeting Presentations

Access To Culturally Competent Health Services: Serving Military Veterans From A Holistic Perspective

UNC - Charlotte, February 24, 2015, Charlotte NC

Shura RD, Williams VG, Rowland JA. *Towards an Evidence-Based Protocol for Evaluating ADHD with OIF/OEF/OND Veterans.*



American Neuropsychiatric Association

2015 Annual Meeting Theme: **NEUROPSYCHIATRY UPDATE**

March 25 - 28, 2015, Orlando FL

Jadadian A, Hurley RA, Taber KH. *Adults with ADHD: A Review of Recent Findings.*

Reihl KM, Hurley RA, Taber KH. *The Neuroanatomy of Implicit and Explicit Bias: Implications for Clinicians.*

Shura RD, Denning JH. *Performance Validity Testing: A Critical Update.*

Shura R, Hurley RA, Taber KH. *Working Memory: Bridging Cognitive Theory and Clinical Neuroscience.*

Shura R, Yoash-Gantz R, Taber KH, Stefanick A. *A Complex Case of a Veteran Post Frontal Meningioma Resection: Neurological and Neuropsychological Interpretations.*

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

Invited Lectures

continued from page 2

Dr. Robin A. Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented *TBI and Common Co-Morbidities* as part of the Managing Visual Impairment in Adults with Acquired Brain Injury panel at a meeting of the North Carolina Chapter of Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of Blind and Visually Impaired on March 20, 2015 in Charlotte, NC. Dr. Hurley presented *Neuropsychiatry of TBI and its Common Co-Morbidities* as part of the Substance Use Disorders and Traumatic Brain Injury symposium at the Addiction Medicine 2015 Conference on April 10, 2015 in Asheville, NC.

Dr. Scott McDonald (MIRECC Fellowship Director, Richmond) presented *Resilience is Common after Adult SCI. What Exactly does THAT Mean?* as part of the Spinal Cord Injury & Disorders Grand Rounds, April 2015, McGuire VAMC, Richmond VA.

VA/DOD/USPHS Social Work Training Series

Jointly offered by the Department of Defense, US Public Health Service, and Veterans Administration, Employee Education System

Developing Lifelong Resilience - Personal, Professional and Team-Level Strategies

Mira Brancu, PhD
Juanita Hill, MSW, LCSW-A

Credit Hours: 1.50

VA TMS catalog number: 24396

Journal Articles

Crawford EF, Elbogen EB, Wagner HR, Kudler H, Calhoun PS, Brancu M, Straits-Troster KA. *Surveying Treatment Preferences in Iraq-Afghanistan Veterans with PTSD Symptoms: A Step Toward Veteran-Centered Care.* Journal of Traumatic Stress. 2015; 28(2): 118-126.

Fulton JJ, Calhoun PS, Wagner HR, Schry AR, Hair LP, Feeling N, Elbogen E, Beckham JC. *The prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans: A meta-analysis.* Journal of Anxiety Disorders. 2015; 31: 98-107.

Hurley RA, Taber KH. *Occupational Exposure to Solvents: Neuropsychiatric and Imaging Features.* Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience. 2015; 27(1): 1-6.

Kimbrel NA, DeBeer BB, Meyer EC, Silvia PJ, Beckham JC, Young KA, Morissette SB. *An examination of the broader effects of warzone experiences on returning Iraq/Afghanistan veterans' psychiatric health.* Psychiatry Research. 2015; 226(1): 78-83.

Kimbrel NA, Hauser MA, Garrett M, Ashley-Koch A, Liu Y, Dennis MF, Klein RC; Veterans Affairs Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center Workgroup, Beckham JC. *Effect of the APOE e4 allele and combat exposure on PTSD among Iraq/Afghanistan-era veterans.* Depression and Anxiety. 2015; 32(5): 307-15.

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Focus on the VISN

MIRECC Activities & VHA Blueprint for Excellence

continued from page 1

Strategy 7: Lead the nation in research and treatment of military service related conditions

★Developing VA's Next Generation of MH Leaders★

We have trained 27 MIRECC postdoctoral Fellows - 75% obtained VA positions with 20% moving into regional or national leadership roles

★Pre-clinical Research Studies★

Developing novel pharmacotherapies for psychiatric disorders & TBI

★Clinical Research Studies★

Developing novel neurosteroid interventions & other medications for treatment of PTSD, TBI, Pain & other disorders

★Post Deployment Mental Health (PDMH) Study★

Providing MH assessments to research participants and connecting Veterans to care via a research conduit (over 3,200 enrolled)

★VIO-SCAN for Violence Risk★

Improving violence screening

★Practice-Based Implementation Network (PBIN)★

Improving implementation of evidence-based psychotherapy nationally

★"Windows to the Brain: Neuropsychiatry of TBI"★

Leading national, regional and local trainings

★National Integrated Smoking Cessation Implementation★

Projects for Veterans with PTSD & homeless Veteran smokers using Learning Collaborative models.

★Biorepository Studies★

Developing a large repository for innovative biomarkers research

★Virtual Mild TBI Patient★

Developing a virtual standardized mild TBI patient to improve training in clinical evaluation

continued on page 4

Journal Articles

Kimbrel NA, Morissette SB, Meyer EC, Chrestman R, Jamroz R, Silvia PJ, Beckham JC, Young KA. *Effect of the 5-HTTLPR polymorphism on posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and quality of life among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.* Anxiety, Stress, & Coping. 2015; 28(4): 456-66.

Liu Y, Garrett ME, Dennis MF, Green KT; VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Registry Workgroup, Ashley-Koch AE, Hauser MA, Beckham JC, Kimbrel NA. *An Examination of the Association between 5-HTTLPR, Combat Exposure, and PTSD Diagnosis among U.S. Veterans.* PLoS One. 2015; 10(3): e0119998.

continued on page 4



CBOC Mental Health Rounds

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

Wednesday May 13 from 9-10 am ET

Thursday May 14 from 12-1 pm ET

Beyond Clutter: When Too Much Stuff Becomes a Disorder

Wednesday June 10 from 9-10 am ET

Thursday June 11 from 12-1 pm ET

Opioid Risk Management & MH

Remember to register in TMS for a session to receive credit. Log into your TMS account to join the presentation.

July 8 & 9 **Polytrauma**

August 12 & 13 **Ethics**

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

Focus on the VISN

MIRECC Activities & VHA Blueprint for Excellence

continued from page 3

Strategy 8: Support innovation in health services through academic affiliations, information exchange, intergovernmental, public-private, and community based initiatives.

★ Research Collaborations ★

77%+ research studies involve academic, DoD, clinical, medical center, and other collaborations including:

Strong, productive collaborations among VISN 6 MIRECC investigators and faculty at affiliate universities.

Supporting the National Research Action Plan through Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium research

Collaborating partner in innovative National PTSD Genetics Consortium

★ Education Collaborations ★

CBOC Mental Health Rounds (online) in collaboration with VISN 16 MIRECC

Online Parenting Course for Service Members & Veterans in collaboration with DoD and multiple VA partners

Mental Health & Chaplaincy multi-site educational collaboration with DoD

"Treating the Invisible Wounds of War" trainings with AHEC and CSSP

★ Practice Improvement Collaborations ★

Practice-Based Implementation Network collaboration with NC-PTSD

HOME Project collaboration with VISN 16, MHS, ORH, and local suicide prevention and MH teams

TBI CPG - extensive participation in VHA's development and ongoing management of the TBI assessment/treatment system of care

★ Outreach Collaborations ★

North Carolina Vet-to-Vet with state & Veteran organizations; NC Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families

Visit our web site for more resources

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6.asp>

Online Training Resources for Veterans

<http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/>

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 such as relationship and parenting problems, financial hardship, and re-adjustment issues.

Moving Forward - Overcoming Life's Challenges

Moving Forward is an educational and life coaching program that teaches Problem Solving skills to help you better handle life's challenges

Parenting for Service Members & Veterans

This on-line course provides parents with tools that strengthen parenting skills and helps them reconnect with their children.

PTSD Coach Online

PTSD Coach Online is for anyone who needs help with upsetting feelings. Trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress can benefit.

Journal Articles

continued from page 3

Naylor JC, Kilts JD, Bradford DW, Strauss JL, Capehart BP, Szabo ST, Hertzberg MA, Szabo ST, Smith KD, Dunn CE, Keefe FJ, Davidson JRT, Wagner HR, Hamer RM, Marx CE. *A Pilot Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial of Adjunctive Aripiprazole in Chronic PTSD in U.S. Military Veterans Resistant to Antidepressant Treatment.* International Clinical Psychopharmacology. 2015; 30(3): 167-74.

Shura RD, Rowland JA, Yoash-Gantz RE. *Factor structure and construct validity of the Behavioral Dyscontrol Scale-II.* Clinical Neuropsychology. 2015; 29(1): 82-100.

Stratton KJ, Bender MC, Cameron JJ, Pickett TC. *Development and evaluation of a behavioral pain management treatment program in a Veterans Affairs medical center.* Military Medicine. 2015; 180(3): 263-8.

Walker WC, McDonald SD, Franke LM. *Diagnostic accuracy of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist in blast-exposed military personnel.* Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development. 2014; 51(8): 1203-16.

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 - Sleep Disturbances after TBI

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

★ Free ★ Web Courses for Providers *Treating the Invisible Wounds of War* www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier

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

- 1 - *Treating the Invisible Wounds of War (TTIWW) english & spanish editions*
- 2 - *TTIWW - A Primary Care Approach*
- 3 - *TTIWW - Employee Assistance in the Civilian Workforce*
- 4 - *TTIWW - Issues of Women Returning from Combat*
- 5 - *TTIWW - Recognizing the Signs of mTBI during Routine Eye Examinations*
- 6 - *TTIWW - Understanding Military Family Issues*
- 7 - *TTIWW - Taking a Military History: Four Critical Questions*

These courses were developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC).