



# VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Post Deployment Mental Health



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## Focus on the VISN

### 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.

### Factors Impacting Outcomes in the PTSD Recovery Program

**John Lynch (PI), Christina Sheerin (CO-) & Jennifer Coleman** (student, dissertation project) This IRB approved study is currently in the data collection phase, sampling from patients who have been enrolled in the Richmond VA's PTSD Group treatment. The purpose is investigating overall treatment effectiveness with particular attention to racial disparities in treatment outcome and treatment attrition.

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

**Three MIRECC studies, all featured in the Spring 2015 issue of Research Currents, illustrate the breadth of our work!**



### VA research explores variability in PTSD rates seen in studies of Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans

A meta-analysis on the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder among Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan reveals that, on average, 23 percent of these Veterans have been diagnosed with the condition.

...According to lead author Dr. Jessica Fulton, a clinical psychologist at the Durham VA Medical Center ... the main goal of the new study was to get a better idea of what the average rate of PTSD is for OEF and OIF Veterans. [www.research.va.gov/currents/spring2015/spring2015-11.cfm](http://www.research.va.gov/currents/spring2015/spring2015-11.cfm)

### Self-harm, suicide ideation tightly linked in Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans

Non-suicidal self-injury-that is, purposefully hurting oneself without conscious suicidal intent-is relatively common among Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans ... The research, conducted by Dr. Nathan Kimbrel, a research psychologist at the Durham VA Medical Center, included 151 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans. Of those, 14 percent reported a history of non-suicidal self-injury, or NSSI. Moreover, the study found that those who deliberately hurt themselves were more likely to engage in suicidal behavior. The researchers hope that NSSI could serve as a marker for identifying which Veterans are most likely to attempt suicide. [www.research.va.gov/currents/spring2015/spring2015-18.cfm](http://www.research.va.gov/currents/spring2015/spring2015-18.cfm)

### Chronic traumatic encephalopathy: Has the worry outpaced the science?

A new review article by a group of VA brain-injury experts strikes a cautionary tone-but also a note of optimism-regarding a long-term brain condition known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE ... They suggest public anxiety over the condition has run ahead of the science, which they say is still in its infancy. And perhaps most important for Veterans and others who have incurred traumatic brain injuries, ... they emphasize that the short- and long-term outlook for most people with TBIs is brighter than what some have come to believe.

[www.research.va.gov/currents/spring2015/spring2015-20.cfm](http://www.research.va.gov/currents/spring2015/spring2015-20.cfm)

### Approved Research Sites & Contacts:

**Durham VA**  
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## Focus on the VISN National Service

On May 19, **Dr. John Fairbank (MIRECC Director)** participated in a Twitter Chat on Mental Health hosted by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute. The focus of the Chat was on how patient and clinician involvement is making a difference in mental health research. VA was one of seven organizations involved. Dr. Fairbank served as the VA subject matter expert.

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/mhtalk?src=hash&vertical=default&f=tweets>

**Dr. Robin Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education)** continues as an invited member of the VA contingent to the ongoing partnership with the DoD to revise the 2009 VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline: *Management of Concussion/mild TBI*. The group will meet in Falls Church, Virginia June 29 - July 2, 2015 for continued work on the guideline.

## VA Awards & Recognition



**Dr. CJ Fleming**, a member of our MIRECC Clinical Core research group, was awarded the silver medal at Durham VA's Research Week poster contest! The poster utilized the Veterans Health and Needs Assessment Survey.

## Invited Lectures

**Hurley RA.** *Windows to the Brain: Neuropsychiatry of War-Related TBI and its Comorbidities* presented at the Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and their Families meeting on Traumatic Brain Injury, June 25, 2015, Joint Forces Headquarters, Raleigh NC.

**Miskey H, Barnett M.** *Capacity.* Six-hour continuing education training on financial and medical decision making sponsored by Northwest AHEC and Wake Forest School of Medicine presented in May 2015 at Hefner VA Medical Center, Salisbury, NC.

**Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell WC, O'Mara S.** *Implementation of a mental health certification program for chaplains.* Workshop presented at the Caring for the Human Spirit Conference: Integrating Spiritual Care in Healthcare, April 2015, Orlando, FL.

**Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell W, Meador KG.** *Advancing chaplaincy-mental health integration with research and technology.* Workshop presented at the Association of Professional Chaplains Annual Conference, June 2015, Louisville, KY.

**Shura RD.** *Evidence-Based Assessment of ADHD with Veterans* presented as part of Hefner VAMC Mental Health Grand Rounds, June 18, 2015, Salisbury, NC.

**Steinhauser KE, Grant G, Nieuwsma JA.** *Make your chatter matter: Structured communication for healthcare chaplains.* Workshop presented at the Caring for the Human Spirit Conference: Integrating Spiritual Care in Healthcare, April 2015, Orlando, FL.

## Focus on the VISN Leadership Activities

**Dr. Teven Pickett (Fellowship Director, MIRECC Richmond site)** was recently elected President Elect for the Virginia Academy of Clinical Psychology. His two year term of service began in April.

**Dr. Christine Marx (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research)** will become interim Vice Chair for Faculty in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke on July 1, 2015. Dr. Marx also continues to serve as Director of the Translational Neuroscience Division.

## Transitions

**Dr. Jennifer Naylor** will be taking on chairing our Women Veterans Research Workgroup. Our thanks to **Dr. Jennifer Runnals** for her leadership in making it an incredibly productive team over the past 3 years.



**MIRECC Fellow Dr. Lillian Flores Stevens** transitioned June 1 into a staff Psychologist position at the Richmond VA. In her new role as a Research Psychologist, Dr. Flores Stevens will serve as the Site-Principal Investigator and data specialist for the Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems (TBIMS) project.

The TBIMS program was created in 1987 by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. It is a prospective, longitudinal, multi-center study which examines TBI recovery and outcomes following coordinated acute medical care and inpatient rehabilitation. There are 16 public sector facilities that serve as TBIMS sites, including the five VA Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers.



## CBOC Mental Health Rounds

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

Wednesday July 8 from 9-10 am ET

Thursday July 9 from 12-1 pm ET

**Polytrauma**

Wednesday August 12 from 9-10 am ET

Thursday August 13 from 12-1 pm ET

**Ethics**

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

September 9 & 10 **Native American Mental Health Needs**

Contact Ashley McDaniel with any questions:  
[ashley.mcdaniel@va.gov](mailto:ashley.mcdaniel@va.gov) or 501-257-1223

## Meeting Presentations



29th Annual Meeting of the  
Associated Professional Sleep  
Societies  
June 6-10, 2015  
Seattle WA

**Hughes JM, Swinkels C, Beckham J, Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Workgroup, Ulmer C.** *The Relationship Between Sleep Quality and Resilience in Veterans and Active Duty Personnel of the Iraq and Afghanistan Conflicts.*

Selected as one of the abstracts featured in the meeting's press release!

### Resilience and Sleep in Veterans/Military

#### Personnel - Findings from the MIRECC Registry

<http://www.aasmnet.org/articles.aspx?id=5618#>

A new study suggests that poor sleep quality is associated with reduced resilience among veterans and returning military personnel ... 63 percent of participants endorsed poor sleep quality, which was negatively associated with resilience. Longer sleep onset, lower sleep efficiency, shorter sleep duration, worse sleep quality, and greater daytime disturbance were each associated with lower resilience. Findings suggest that appraisal of sleep quality may contribute to resilience scores more than self-reported sleep efficiency.

"To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the relationship between resilience, defined here as positive stress-coping ability, and self-reported sleep quality among veterans and active duty service-members of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts," said lead author Jaime M. Hughes, MPH, MSW, research affiliate at Durham VA Medical Center and doctoral student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. ... The study group comprised 2,597 Iraq and Afghanistan military veterans. ...

## Journal Articles

**Bishop L, Lamar CD, Hurley RA, Taber KH.** *Neuroimaging and Neuropsychological Consequences of Cardiac Arrest.* Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience. 2015; 27(2): 75-79.

**Curry JF.** Invited Editorial - *Good news in the battle against military suicide.* American Journal of Psychiatry. 2015; 172(5): 406-7.

**Fortune-Britt AG, Nieuwsma JA, Gierisch JM, Datta SK, Stoldorf DP, Cantrell WC, Ethridge AK, Angel C, Millspaugh D, Bauch SL, Jackson GL.** *Evaluating the implementation and sustainability of a program for enhancing veterans' intimate relationships.* Military Medicine. 2015; 180(6): 676-683.

**Kelley ML, Brancu M, Robbins AT, D'Lima GM, Strauss JL, Curry JF, Fairbank JA, Runnals J, VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Women Veterans Workgroup, VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Workgroup.** *Drug use and childhood-, military- and post-military trauma exposure among women and men veterans.* Drug and Alcohol Dependence. 2015; 152: 201-208.

continued in next column

## Updates - 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.

### Recent Workshops:

Steinhauser, K.E., Grant, G., & Nieuwsma, J.A. (April 2015). *Make your chatter matter: Structured communication for healthcare chaplains.* Workshop presented at the Caring for the Human Spirit Conference: Integrating Spiritual Care in Healthcare, Orlando, FL.

Nieuwsma, J.A., Cantrell, W.C., & O'Mara, S. (April 2015). *Implementation of a mental health certification program for chaplains.* Workshop presented at the Caring for the Human Spirit Conference: Integrating Spiritual Care in Healthcare, Orlando, FL.

Nieuwsma, J.A., Cantrell, W., & Meador, K.G. (June 2015). *Advancing chaplaincy-mental health integration with research and technology.* Workshop presented at the Association of Professional Chaplains Annual Conference, Louisville, KY.

## Resources for Veterans/Families NC4VETS RESOURCE GUIDE

The purpose of this comprehensive resource guide is to assist and educate Veterans in learning about state and federal Veteran benefits. Topic areas include services, employment, healthcare, education, housing and personal services.

<http://www.nc4vets.com/blog/resource-guide>

This resource guide was produced by the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs in partnership with the Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families.

<http://www.veteransfocus.org>

## Journal Articles

**Kimbrel NA, Gratz KL, Tull MT, Morissette SB, Meyer EC, DeBeer BB, Silvia PJ, Calhoun PC, Beckham JC.** *Non-suicidal self-injury as a predictor of active and passive suicidal ideation among Iraq/Afghanistan war veterans.* Psychiatry Research. 2015; 227(2-3): 360-362.

**Kimbrel NA, Meyer EC, Beckham JC.** *A clinician's perspective on memory reconsolidation as the primary basis for psychotherapeutic change in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).* Behavioral and Brain Sciences. 2015 Jan; 38: e8.

**Oddone AE, Dennis PA, Calhoun PS, Watkins LL, Sherwood A, Dedert EA, Green KT, Stein JN, Dennis MF, Beckham JC.** *Orthostatic hypotension in younger individuals with and without posttraumatic stress disorder.* Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy. 2015; 7(3): 229-233.

**Shura RD, Taber KH, Brenner LA, Wortzel.** *Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy and Traumatic Brain Injury: Bridging Pathology, Function, and Prognosis.* Current Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Reports. 2015; 3(2): 106-114.

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## Journal Articles

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**Tye S, Van Voorhees E, Hu C, Lineberry T.** *Preclinical perspectives on posttraumatic stress disorder criteria in DSM-5.* Harvard Review of Psychiatry. 2015; 23(1): 51-8.

**Ulmer CS, Bosworth HB, Germain A, Lindquist J, Olsen M, Brancu M; VA Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center Registry Workgroup, Beckham JC.** *Associations between sleep difficulties and risk factors for cardiovascular disease in veterans and active duty military personnel of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.* Journal of Behavioral Medicine. 2015; 38(3): 544-555.

**Vasterling JJ, Taft CT, Proctor SP, Macdonald HZ, Lawrence A, Kalill K, Kaiser AP, Lee LO, King DW, King LA, Fairbank JA.** *Establishing a methodology to examine the effects of war-zone PTSD on the family: The Family Foundations Study.* International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research. 2015; 24(2): 143-55.

**Wilson LC, Kimbrel NA, Meyer EC, Young KA, Morissette SB.** *Do child abuse and maternal care interact to predict military sexual trauma?* Journal of Clinical Psychology. 2015; 71(4): 378-86.

## Resources for Providers

### *Treatment of Substance Use Disorders in Veterans with PTSD*

[www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6/community.asp](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6/community.asp)

This PowerPoint presentation by **Dr. John Allen (MIRECC Senior Scientist, Clinical Care)** addresses treatment of substance use disorder in Veterans who are also diagnosed as having PTSD. It reviews research on how deployment and war zone stressors contribute to development of each of the two conditions separately and their co-occurrence; evidence-based treatments for substance use disorder and PTSD; epidemiological findings on the dual diagnosis, dynamic interactions of the two conditions. It also provides recommendations for treatment. To assist community health care providers, the presentation also comments on issues of military culture; VA resources for OEF-OIF Veterans; and criteria for eligibility of care.

**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** 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 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.

## ★ Free ★ Web Courses for Providers

### *Treating the Invisible Wounds of War*

[www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier](http://www.aheconnect.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.