



VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Post Deployment Mental Health



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VISN 6 Leadership

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Focus on the VISN

Invited Lectures

Dr. Robin Hurley (Associate MIRECC Director, Education) presented *Windows to the Brain: Neuroimaging of Brain Injury* as part of a special workshop on September 18, 2013 held in conjunction with the North American Brain Injury Society 11th Annual Conference on Brain Injury, New Orleans, LA. She presented *Windows to the Brain: The Neuropsychiatry of Brain Injury* as part of Connecting the Dots: Brain Injury Summit on September 28, 2013 held at the College of Health and Human Sciences, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC. Dr. Hurley presented *Windows to the Brain: Working with TBI and PTSD* as part of the From Boots to Suits: Empowering Female Veterans' Transition into the Workforce event held on October 7, 2013 in Charlotte, NC. She presented *Windows to the Brain: The Neuropsychiatry of TBI and its Co-Morbidities* as part of Duke University Hospital Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine's Grand Rounds/Journal Club on October 23, 2013 in Durham, NC.

National Service

Dr. Brancu and Dr. Runnals reflect on their recent detail

Drs. Mira Brancu (MIRECC Registry Managing Director) and **Jennifer Runnals** (MIRECC Repository Coordinator and Durham VAMC Research Privacy Officer) recently each completed a 90-day detail in Waco, Texas. They served as Interim Director of the VISN 17 Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans located in Waco, Texas. Dr. Brancu served from April through July. Dr. Runnals completed her detail in October. They were overseeing the research center during a national search for a new permanent director. Both were appointed during this time of upheaval and transition for their strong communication, interpersonal, organizational, and team development skills. Their main areas of focus during this assignment were on team development and helping the center review and develop new policies and procedures.

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Education Component Update



Mental Health Innovations
AUGUST 2013
Updates from VA's Specialized Mental Health Centers
IN THIS ISSUE: Mental Health and Primary Care: Partnering to Improve Veteran Care

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

Each issue of this news brief from the Education Components for the VA's Mental Health Centers of Excellence focuses on a different topic. Work from our MIRECC reviewing the evidence base for cognitive behavioral therapy was featured in this issue!

Updates on the MIRECC Fellowship Program

Welcome to our new Fellows!

Five new Fellows recently joined our Durham, Richmond and Salisbury sites.

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Challenging issues addressed included one that many other VA research centers struggle with - time spent involved with VA and academic affiliate institution appointments. New standard operating procedures were developed with input from local and regional HR, regional counsel, and VISN 17 fiscal office. Team development was further facilitated by the VA National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD). An excellent and probably underutilized resource, NCOD provides a wide variety of help to teams and leaders. Examples include needs assessment, consultation, training, and development activities. An additional focus during this detail was placed on building the center through the hiring of key personnel. Finding highly skilled support and professional staff to sustain operations and expand critical research areas is not an easy task, but is one of the most important administrative functions for a director. Excellent staff not only leads to long-term success, but also the stability of an organization.

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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>

Journal Articles

Allen JP, Wurst FM, Thon N, Litten RZ. *Assessing the drinking status of liver transplant patients with alcoholic liver disease.* Liver Transplantation. 2013; 19 (4): 369-76.

Elbogen EB, Johnson SC, Newton VM, Fuller S, Wagner HR, Beckham JC; VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Registry Workgroup. *Self-report and longitudinal predictors of violence in Iraq and Afghanistan war era veterans.* Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease. 2013; 201(10):872-6.

Hertzberg JS, Carpenter VL, Kirby AC, Calhoun PS, Moore SD, Dennis MF, Dennis PA, Dedert EA, Beckham JC. *Mobile Contingency Management as an Adjunctive Smoking Cessation Treatment for Smokers With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.* Nicotine and Tobacco Research. 2013; 15(11): 1934-8.

Kulubekova S, McDowell JJ. *Computational model of selection by consequences: Patterns of preference change on concurrent schedules.* Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior. 2013;100(2):147-64

Morey RA, Haswell CC, Selgrade ES, Massoglia D, Liu C, Weiner J, Marx CE; MIRECC Work Group, Cernak I, McCarthy G. *Effects of chronic mild traumatic brain injury on white matter integrity in Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans.* Human Brain Mapping. 2013;34(11):2986-99.

Updates on the MIRECC Fellowship Program

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Welcome to our new Fellows!

Durham site:

Emily L. Gentes PhD earned her BA in Psychology at Skidmore College and her PhD in Clinical Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Emily completed her pre-doctoral internship in Clinical Psychology at the Durham VAMC. Her research interests focus on features that distinguish normal from pathological experiences of anxiety and those that distinguish closely related anxiety and mood disorders from one another. She has a particular interest in features that may operate across distinct anxiety and mood disorders to confer risk for psychopathology. Emily looks forward to continuing her clinical work with veterans while also conducting research at the MIRECC.



Michelle B. Rissling

PhD received a BS in psychology from the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ, a PhD in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis on Behavioral Medicine from the SDSU/UCSD Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology in San Diego, CA, and completed her internship at the Reno VAMC. She recently finished her first year as a MIRECC Fellow at the Palo Alto VAMC. Her research interests include sleep and circadian disturbances in the context of medical and psychiatric co-morbidities. Her clinical focus has been on cognitive behavioral treatments for insomnia, depression, anxiety and health risk behaviors. Her first year in the MIRECC focused on older adults and women and she is excited about extending her research to returning Veterans. Michelle is from a multi-generational military family and enjoys cooking, sleeping in and spending time with her husband and pre-schooler.



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South Central MIRECC CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Each CBOC MH Rounds presentation is now offered **two** times every month.

November 13 from 9-10 am ET

November 14 from 12-1 pm ET

Gun Safety

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

Credits/Hours: 1

Accreditations: ACCME, ANCC, APA, ASWB

VANTS: 1-800-767-1750 Access code-26461#

December 11 & 12, 2013 Sleep Disorders

January 8 & 9, 2014 Ethics

Contact Dr. Geri Adler with any questions:
geri.adler@va.gov or 713-440-4480

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There are certainly clear benefits to accepting a detail like this, especially for early career staff looking to expand opportunities for professional development and career paths. However, completing a detail can have its personal and professional challenges. Personal challenges relate especially to family (What assistance will be required of other family members, such as spouses, in caring for dependents, aging parents, pets, etc.? How will duties change? What kind of hardship will it cause on supporting family members?) and travel (How much travel is required? Who will manage travel arrangements?). Professional challenges include changes to previous commitments (Who will provide coverage and possibly continuity for work duties being left behind?), leadership (Who are the key personnel in new environment? What resources are available?), and balancing the needs and interests of personnel at all levels - center, local medical facility, regional/VISN-level, and national. Ultimately, it is an excellent opportunity not only for professional development, but also to provide a service to the VA in a time of need.

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Resources for Providers

Treatment of Substance Use Disorders in Veterans with PTSD

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.

Meeting Presentations

Kudler H, Crawford E, Mann-Wrobel M. *Building Community-Based, Veteran-Centered Care.* Clipp Symposium on Trajectory Science, Duke University, Durham, NC, October 9, 2013

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

Welcome to our new Fellows!

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Richmond site:

Christina Sheerin PhD received her BS in Psychology from Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, and her MA and PhD in Clinical Psychology from Western Michigan University. She recently completed her pre-doctoral internship at VA Connecticut, West Haven. Christina's research interests center on treatment effectiveness and utilization. Her focus is on facilitation of exposure-based therapies for anxiety disorders through translational research including neurobiological mechanisms of extinction learning and identification of factors associated with mental health treatment seeking and engagement. Her clinical focus has been on evidence-based therapy for anxiety disorders and PTSD as well as substance use disorders, work that she expects to continue with returning Veterans. Christina is a recent transplant to Virginia and Richmond and looking forward to exploring the area, particularly the running/hiking trails, and numerous museums.



Salisbury site:

Robert D. Shura PsyD received his BA in psychology, anthropology, religious studies, and international studies from Pennsylvania State University and his PsyD in clinical psychology from Marshall University. He completed pre-doctoral internship at the VA Eastern Colorado in Denver. His clinical focus is neuropsychological assessment, especially of Veterans with TBI. His research interests include syndromes and neuropsychiatric problems related to TBI, validity testing with TBI patients, and psychometric issues. In his spare time, he enjoys movies, camping, and any event involving food.



Holly Miskey PhD earned her BA in Psychology from California University of Pennsylvania, her MA in Clinical Health Psychology from Appalachian State University, and her PhD from University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She completed her pre-doctoral internship in Clinical Psychology at the Durham VA. Her clinical focus is on general neuropsychology and research interests include executive and frontal lobe functioning, specifically disinhibition and impulsivity. In her free time, she enjoys a good cup of coffee, playing sports, reading, and live music.



Transitions

We wish the best of luck to MIRECC Fellow **Saule Kulubekova**, who completed her fellowship at our Salisbury site. Dr. Kulubekova has accepted a full-time position at the Durham VA as a Clinical Psychologist with a health psychology and neuropsychology focus.

National Service

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Having the opportunity to take on this type of detail is not a common occurrence. A major impediment is the burden placed on other center employees who must temporarily assume the duties of the detailed person. This works best when there are staff members who have been cross-trained and there is flexibility in the requirements and roles of remaining staff members. In addition, it requires strong support from the leadership and administrative team. Jennifer and Mira would like to deeply thank the Registry staff for their support, flexibility and willingness to take on new tasks during these absences. They would also like to express their deepest appreciation to Dr. John Fairbank (VISN 6 MIRECC Director). He encouraged them to consider taking on the details and provided guidance and support throughout, demonstrating his strong commitment to the importance of service to other research centers. Finally, they express their highest gratitude for the incredible support provided by the VISN 6 MIRECC administrative team (Tasia Brackett, Misty Brooks, Brian Gordon, and Perry Whitted). They all helped with travel arrangements, important operational recommendations, and other administrative guidance.

Resources for Building Resiliency

MOVING FORWARD OVERCOMING LIFE'S CHALLENGES

The VA and DoD partnered to develop *Moving Forward*, a free, on-line education and life coaching program that teaches problem solving skills to Veterans, Service Members and their families. This evidence-based program uses interactive exercises and video demonstrations to teach skills for overcoming life challenges such as relationship problems, financial hardship, and re-adjustment issues. Introduce your patients to this anonymous, always available, web-based resource and empower them to keep Moving Forward!

www.StartMovingForward.org

Outreach to Providers: *Group Supervision for Clinicians Listening to Trauma Histories*

Therapists treating PTSD often find themselves in parallel turmoil, as they react to the patient's inner and outer worlds. Good clinical supervision is essential. In addition to receiving guidance and support from an experienced colleague, having the opportunity to share one's often turbulent emotions and learning how these can be used to better understand the case are also important.

Facilitator: Dr. Harold Kudler, Psychiatrist & MIRECC Associate Director - Clinical

Purpose: Assist presenter in processing a case that is particularly disturbing and hard to let go of.

Audience: Trauma clinicians and staff who routinely hear disturbing trauma histories

Objectives: As a result of participating, the attendee will be able to:

- Develop new personal and professional strategies and new clinical understanding;
- Recognize the potential effects of trauma narratives on therapists and staff;
- Identify the importance of on-going clinical supervision in work with trauma

Outcome: By building on the experience of peers and senior clinicians, the attendee will increase his/her effectiveness in serving Veterans, strengthen his/her clinical skills and improve self-care.

Upcoming sessions: November 11 December 18

Participation available in person (Durham VA) or by audio-teleconferencing. Register to participate or present a case at an upcoming session by contacting Harold Kudler (harold.kudler@va.gov; 919-286-0411 ext 7021).

Visit our web site for more resources

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