



## Director's Update

In addition to our mission to accelerate the movement of research innovations into practice, our goal is to disseminate new knowledge, develop clinical educational products, and support and accelerate the progress of junior level investigators toward independent mid-level research

and leadership careers. To that end, this year we released a new Education Grant Program, hosted by the Education Core and a Research Pilot Grant Program to support early career research investigators. We were pleased to award 5 education grants and 15 research pilot grants to be conducted this fiscal year!

The awardees for our FY2017 Education Core Grant Program:

**Durham VA:** **Juanita Hill, LCSW** - *Increasing Knowledge and Utilization of Safety Planning in High- and Intermediate-Risk Patients in Inpatient Psychiatric Care*

**Hampton VA:** **Celena Thompson, PsyD** - *Creation of a Partner-Assisted Mobile App for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia: CBT-1 Partner*

**Salem VA:** **Ashley Engels Dibble, PhD** - *Motivating and Reinforcing Quitting: Development of a Motivational Enhancement and Contingency Management Approach to Smoking Cessation in Residential Care*

**Salisbury VA:** **Sandra Robinson, RN, BSN** - *Combat Female Veteran Life After War Program*  
**Chaplain Ryan Wagers** - *Warrior to Soul Mate for the Post 9/11 Transitional Couple*

The awardees for our FY2017 Research Core Pilot Grant Program:

**Durham VA:** **Dr. Katherine Cunningham** - *Moral Injury and Suicide Ideation*

**Dr. Eric Dedert** - *Mobile Contingency Management Intervention for Alcohol and Smoking*

**Dr. Nathan Kimbrel** - *Feasibility of Using Whole Genome Sequencing To Identify Rare Genetic Variants that Predict Suicidal Behavior among Veterans with PTSD and Depression*

**Dr. Rebecca Klein** - *APOE Genotype Effects of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury in Female Mice*

**Dr. Jennifer Naylor** - *Inflammatory Biomarkers as Predictors of Therapeutic Response to Pregnenolone in Chronic Low Back Pain*

**Dr. Delin Sun** - *Effects of Moral Injury on the Structure and Functional Organization of the Brain*

**Dr. Christi Ulmer** - *CBT-I for Circadian Sleep Dysregulation*

**Hampton VA:** **Dr. Nicole Dutta** - *Partner-Assisted CBT-Insomnia*

**Richmond VA:** **Dr. Thomas Burroughs** - *Mind Freedom Plan Treatment on Alcohol and Substance Use*

**Dr. Scott McDonald** - *A Resilience-Based Treatment for Veterans with Persistent Post-Concussive Symptoms After Mild TBI*

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## Director's Update

**Salisbury VA:** **Dr. Timothy Brearly** - *Videoconference-Based Administration of Cognitive Testing*  
**Dr. Sarah Martindale** - *The Function of Sleep in the Relationship between Alcohol Use and Cognitive Functioning in Combat Veterans*  
**Dr. Holly Miskey** - *Examining Executive Dysfunction in Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans with PTSD*  
**Dr. Jared Rowland** - *Examining Outcomes of Traumatic Events Experienced Concurrently with Traumatic Brain Injury*  
**Dr. Robert Shura** - *Effects of Competing Cognitive Demands on Performance Validity*

Congratulations to all! I look forward to sharing the results of these efforts upon their completion!

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

## Focus on the VISN

### New Funding: National Program Development

The VISN 6 and Rocky Mountain (VISN 19) MIRECCs were awarded funding to support an "Enterprise-Wide Collaborative Rural Access Solution" to develop a Comprehensive Rural Suicide Prevention roll-out program over the next three years. The program will be managed by the Office of Suicide Prevention and funded and overseen by the Office of Rural Health. It will integrate the HOME intervention program (which recently also won the Shark Tank competition) with a public health community engagement program developed by VISN 19 investigators. The focused will be to improve the prevention of suicide as well as treatment engagement needs.

**Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8**

## Focus on the VISN

### Honors & Awards

**Dr. Mira Brancu** (MIRECC Deputy Director) was promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Division of Social and Community Psychiatry, Duke University School of Medicine.

### National Service

**Dr. Robin A. Hurley** (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) served as a member of DoD CDMRP scientific merit review Epilepsy Research Program peer review panel, January 18-20, 2017.

**Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 2, 7, 8**

### New Leadership Activities

**Drs. Holly Miskey** and **Robert Shura** (MIRECC Faculty, Salisbury site) became the new Co-Directors for the Special Fellowship for Psychology/Allied Health for our Salisbury site on January 1, 2017.

### New Grants

PI:Perrin  
Site PI: **Scott McDonald** (MIRECC Faculty, Richmond site)  
**Randomized Clinical Trial of a Telehealth Transition Assistance Program for SCI Caregivers**  
Funded by: Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

## Education Project Update



The February 2017 edition of our national news briefs is now available on the MIRECC website at: <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/newsletter/current.asp>

This issue focuses on reducing stigma, and features the work of **Drs. Keith Meador** and **Jason Nieuwsma** (Director & Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care)!

### CLINICAL

#### Collaboration Between Mental Health and Chaplains Enhances Care for Veterans Blueprint for Excellence Strategy 8

#### Free Webinars for Providers by MIRECC Faculty

## Education Project Update

The purpose of this series is to increase access to clinical training and education for rural community-based providers of mental health services to military service members and Veterans. We have partnered with the Duke University Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Partnership Program, headed by Dr. Marvin Swartz.

That program supports the Southern Regional AHEC, which provides clinician education to providers in and around the Fayetteville, North Carolina area that includes Ft. Bragg and nine rural counties. Most attendees are community providers serving military service members, Veterans, and families living in the area. MIRECC faculty will be providing webinars in the following areas:

- March 22** *Neurosteroid Interventions, Dr. Christine Marx*
- April 22** *Family Needs and Interventions, Dr. John Curry*
- May 24** *Chronic Pain, Dr. Jennifer Naylor*
- June 28** *Bipolar Disorder Assessment, Dr. Joshua Tiegreen*



In affiliation with Duke University Medical Center  
Part of the NC AHEC Program

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#### Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8

# Conferences



International Neuropsychology Society  
February 1 -4, 2017

**Brearily TW, Shura RD, Martindale SL, Lazowski R, Luxton DD, Shenal B, Rowland JA.** *Neuropsychological test administration by videoconference: A systematic review and meta-analysis.* Oral Presentation

**Martindale SL, Morissette SB, Rowland JA, Dolan SL.** *Sleep quality affects cognitive functioning in returning combat veterans beyond combat exposure, PTSD, and mild TBI history.* Oral Presentation

**Miskey HM, Yoash-Gantz RE, Shura RD, Kulubekova S, Rowland JR.** *Cognitive Performance of Veterans in an Inpatient Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Program Pre- and Post-Treatment.* Oral Presentation

**Shura RD, Rowland JA, Martindale SL, Brearily TW, Miskey HM.** *Evaluating the Motor Slowing Hypothesis of Depression.* Poster

**Rowland JA, Stapleton-Kotloski JR, Taber KH, Godwin DW.** *Observing Dynamic Networks During the Completion of a Complex Cognitive Task.* Poster

# Publications

## Journal Articles

**Dennis PA, Dennis NM, Van Voorhees EE, Calhoun PS, Dennis MF, Beckham JC.** *Moral transgression during the Vietnam War: A path analysis of the psychological impact of veterans' involvement in wartime atrocities.* *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping.* 2017; 30(2): 188-201

**Dillon KH, Crawford EF, Kudler H, Straits-Troster KA, Elbogen EB, Calhoun PS.** *An Investigation of Treatment Engagement Among Returning Veterans With Problematic Anger.* *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease.* 2017; 205(2): 119-126.

Anger is a commonly reported problem among returning veterans, yet little attention has been devoted to studying treatment engagement among veterans who report anger problems but do not have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This study compares Iraq-Afghanistan veterans with anger/no PTSD (n = 159) to others reporting significant PTSD symptoms (n = 285) and those reporting neither anger nor PTSD (n = 716) on rates of treatment utilization, perceived barriers to treatment, and preferences for care. Relative to the PTSD group, the anger/no-PTSD group was significantly less likely to have received mental health treatment in the last year, despite endorsing barriers to treatment at a lower rate. Furthermore, the anger/no-PTSD group endorsed fewer preferences than the PTSD group. Results suggest that the anger/no-PTSD group is a unique subgroup that may be less likely to identify a need for treatment. Implications are discussed.

**Kimbrel NA, Calhoun PS, Beckham JC.** *Nonsuicidal self-injury in men: A serious problem that has been overlooked for too long.* *World Psychiatry.* 2017; 16(1): 108-109.

**Lind MJ, Brown E, Farrell-Carnahan L, Brown RC, Hawn S, Berenz E, McDonald S, Pickett T, Danielson CK, Thomas S, Amstadter AB.** *Sleep disturbances in OEF/OIF/OND veterans: Associations with PTSD, personality and coping.* *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine.* 2017; 13(2): 291-299.

**Martindale SL, Hurley RA, Taber KH.** *Chronic alcohol use and sleep homeostasis: Risk factors and neuroimaging of recovery.* *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and the Clinical Neurosciences.* 2017; 29(1): A6-5.

**Rowland JA, Stapleton-Kotloski JR, Alberto GE, Rawley JA, Kotloski RJ, Taber KH, Godwin DW.** *Contrasting Effects of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury on the Whole-Brain Resting-State Network: A Magnetoencephalography Study.* *Brain Connectivity.* 2017; 7(1):45-57.

The aim of this study was to evaluate alterations in whole-brain resting-state networks associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). Networks were constructed from locations of peak statistical power on an individual basis from magnetoencephalography (MEG) source series data by applying the weighted phase lag index and surrogate data thresholding procedures. Networks representing activity in the alpha bandwidth as well as wideband activity (DC-80 Hz) were created. Statistical comparisons were adjusted for age and education level. Alpha network results demonstrate reductions in network structure associated with PTSD, but no differences associated with mTBI. Wideband network results demonstrate a shift in connectivity from the alpha to theta bandwidth in both PTSD and mTBI. Also, contrasting alterations in network structure are noted, with increased randomness associated with PTSD and increased structure associated with mTBI. These results demonstrate the potential of the analysis of MEG resting-state networks to differentiate two highly comorbid conditions. The importance of the alpha bandwidth to resting-state connectivity is also highlighted, while demonstrating the necessity of considering activity in other bandwidths during network construction.

**Wilson SM, Krenek M, Dennis PA, Yard SS, Browne KC, Simpson TL.** *Daily associations between PTSD, drinking, and self-appraised alcohol-related problems.* *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors.* 2017; 31(1): 27-35.

[http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/self\\_help.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/self_help.asp)

## Resources to Empower Veterans Mental Health

Self-help materials can provide valuable education and support for Veterans who may be facing mental health challenges, their friends, and family members. There are a wide variety of self-help materials available and it can sometimes be difficult to select the most useful. VA has assembled a list of reviewer-recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the right option for you. For help in finding these materials, please click the "How to Use" tab.



## Online Life Skills Training for Veterans

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

### *AIMS: Anger & Irritability Management Skills*

This course offers a wide range of practical skills and tools to manage your anger and develop self-control over your thoughts and actions.

### *Moving Forward*

An educational and life coaching program that teaches Problem Solving skills to help you better handle life's challenges

### *PTSD Coach Online*

PTSD Coach Online is for trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress. It includes tools to help manage anxiety, anger, sleep problems and more.

### *Parenting for Service Members & Veterans*

This course helps parents learn how to address both everyday parenting challenges as well as family issues unique to military families.

## NC4VETS Resource Guide

This Resource Guide is produced and published by the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist and educate veterans in learning about state and federal veteran benefits. <http://www.nc4vets.com/blog/resource-guide>

# Provider Education



## CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Each CBOC MH Rounds presentation is now offered **twice** a month:

**VA Opioid Overdose Education & Naloxone Distribution Program**

Wednesday March 8 from 9-10 am ET & Thursday March 9 from 12-1 pm ET

**Remember to register in TMS in advance to attend and receive credit.**

- April 12 & 13 *Grief*
- May 10 & 11 *Suicide Prevention for Older Veterans*
- June 14 & 15 *Staff Safety Part 1*

If you require assistance contact:

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PACERS is pleased to announce a **new** "Dementia and Delirium" education module in our curriculum on cognitive disorders. **Each module is accredited for 1 hour of CE and is available to VA providers in the VA Talent Management System.**

### **Dementia and Delirium**

TMS ID 29817

Dementia is a major public health concern, affecting over 5 million Americans, of whom over 560,000 are Veterans. The incidence of dementia increases with age, with more than 90% of those affected aged over 60 years. It is one of the most costly chronic conditions that the VA treats and its financial impact is expected to grow with the increasing number of aging Veterans. This course will describe two of the most common neurocognitive disorders that occur among elderly

### **Dementia and Driving**

TMS ID 28776

One of the most challenging issues clinicians must address when working with Veterans with dementia is declines in driving skills. Approximately 30-45% of persons with dementia continue to drive, placing them at risk for becoming lost, crashing, and other adverse events. Clinicians have recognized a gap in knowledge regarding how to address diminished driving skills and decision-making for drivers with dementia. This training module will provide practical information that clinicians and health care teams can use in their work with older drivers with dementia and their families.



This workshop series was developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC). The web-based versions of the courses are all free at: <http://www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier>

- 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*



## **Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals**

<http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture>

Module 1: *Self-Assessment & Introduction to Military Ethos*

Module 3: *Stressors & Resources*

Module 2: *Military Organization & Roles*

Module 4: *Treatment, Resources & Tools*



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

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## Research Sites & Contacts

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