MID ★ ATLANTIC MIRECC POST DEPLOYMENT MENTAL HEALTH

Briefings

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Director's Update

I am pleased to announce our two new Co - Assistant Directors for the Clinical Core.

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Dr. Nathan Kimbrel will serve as our new **Assistant Director of Implementation Science and Program Evaluation** for the Clinical Core. He is currently a Career Development Award recipient under the mentorship of Dr. Jeannie Beckham (MIRECC Co-Director of Research & Genetics Lab Director). Dr. Kimbrel's research has focused on gene x environment effects on PTSD and suicide risk factors. He also serves as co-Chair of the Durham VA IRB and is a recent recipient of a 4-year Merit Award to examine the long-term functional outcomes associated with non-suicidal self-injury in Veterans, and identify modifiable, treatment-relevant mechanisms that help to maintain self-injurious behavior in Veterans. As the new Assistant Director of Implementation Science and Program Evaluation, he is involved in supporting VISN 6 Behavioral Health Integration Program efforts to develop a patient-centered report-builder to identify and address potential gaps in patient care coordination needs. He also provides consultation to support the National Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Training Program Evaluation efforts.

Dr. Jennifer Naylor will serve as our new **Assistant Director of Translational Science** for the Clinical Core. She is currently a Career Development Award recipient under the mentorship of Dr. Chris Marx (MIRECC Co-Director of Research & Clinical Interventions and Metabolomics Lab Director). Dr. Naylor's research has focused on biomarker identification and therapeutic development, including characterization of neurosteroids and other small molecules and their translation to new interventions for pain, PTSD, TBI, and co-occurring disorders. Dr. Naylor has extensive experience with FDA investigational new drug applications and currently serves on the Durham VA's Subcommittee for Research Safety. As the new Assistant Director of Translational Science, Dr. Naylor will utilize her research findings to inform her efforts as the Clinical Health Psychologist in the Durham Interdisciplinary Pain Clinic and co-facilitator of the MIRECC Women Veterans Workgroup. Dr. Naylor is also an investigator for two VISN 6 MIRECC Clinical Core pilot grants focused on chronic pain management, in addition to leading a randomized controlled trial investigating a novel neurosteroid intervention for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans with persistent pain symptoms.

A warm welcome to Drs. Kimbrel and Naylor in their new roles with the VISN 6 MIRECC.

John A. Fairbank, Ph.D.

Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC

Briefings is published bi-monthly by the Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC's Education Core

Outreach

VA Research Program Reaches Milestone Across the Country

The Salisbury VA's ***Million Veteran Program*** research team, led by **Dr. Robin A. Hurley** (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) informed Veterans about this national research study and recruited new research participants at the 117th VFW National Convention in Charlotte in July.

In conjunction with this outreach, Dr. Hurley was interviewed about this VA research program by several media organizations. She described the goal of the ***Million Veteran Program,*** which is to collect blood samples and answers to a few questions from a million Veterans. These will be used by scientists studying the connections between genes and chronic diseases as well as military-related problems such as PTSD. The 53 sites of the national program have collected nearly a half million samples, and the Salisbury system has contributed almost 8,500.

More on these interviews can be found at:

http://www.charlotteobserver.com/living/health-family/article91607962.html

http://www.twcnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2016/08/3/va-research-program-reaches-milestone-across-the-country.html

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Uniting Forces to Support Military Caregivers Summit

Operation Family Caregiver held its inaugural Uniting Forces to Support Military Caregivers summit in Atlanta, Georgia on July 29, 2016. The summit, which was hosted at The Carter Presidential Center, served to heighten awareness behind the unique issues and challenges faced by caregivers of military service members and Veterans. It targeted military families as well as agencies, and organizations who serve this vulnerable population. Champions for military caregivers served as moderators for panels of discussion focused on the caregiver journey, innovations in military family support, and bringing hidden issues forward that cause military families to struggle.

Dr. Cindy Swinkels (MIRECC Faculty & Coaching into Care) represented ***Coaching into Care*** at this one day conference, and had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Carter!

A call to action from all panel discussants guided future discussions and propel national efforts to unite forces to support military caregivers. The day was filled with outstanding military caregiver advocates from Joining Forces, Blue Star Families, Veterans Administration, Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Military and Veteran Caregiver Network, US House of Representatives, 2016 Invictus Gold Medalist Timothy Payne and many more. The conference concluded with a dinner and awards ceremony recognizing significant accomplishments in military caregiving service and scholarships for continued education for military families.

National Service

Dr. Robin A. Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) is a member of the National Advisory Board meeting for the Auditory and Vestibular Dysfunction Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP), and participated in the REAP's bi-annual Advisory Meeting in August.

Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8

New Leadership Activities

Dr. Nathan Kimbrel (MIRECC Co-Assistant Director of Clinical) has been appointed to serve as Co-Chair of the Durham VA IRB.

Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 7, 8

New Grants

PI: **Dr. Scott Moore** (MIRECC Faculty & Neuroscience Lab Director)

VA Merit Review: ***Mechanisms underlying neuropeptide release in the extended amygdala.***

Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 7, 8

Outreach

Coaching into Care is celebrating our 5th anniversary. As a National program, we have been proudly working with our respective MIRECCs in Philadelphia, Durham, and West Los Angeles to provide support, education, and skill building to family and friends of Veterans needing to access mental health care.

We are excited to announce that we will be holding a **Facebook Live Streaming Live Chat on September 21st at 7pm EST.** We will be co-hosting the event with the Wounded Warrior Project. Please check out the event and engage with the online community. Thank you to Drs. Fairbank and Brancu, who have fostered the development of our local team, past and present.

The Coaching into Care Team

VA Diffusion of Excellence Website

If you have a MIRECC-supported evidence-based project (research, quality improvement, clinical demonstration, etc.) that improves access, care coordination, employee engagement, quality and safety, or the Veteran experience, please submit it as a promising practice into this website. VISN 6 has its own special repository here:

https://vhaindwebsim.v11.med.va.gov/hub2/ppd/tank-visn6.html

Check out our current MIRECC submissions:

Dr. Jeannie Beckham:
Learning Collaborative Models to Improve Provider Treatment Implementation - example through *Integrated Care for Smoking Cessation for Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*

Dr. Mira Brancu:
Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) Program for Rural Veterans

New Personnel

Annie Peacock, MSW is a Social Worker that will be assisting with several projects within the MIRECC. She is currently training with the Coaching into Care program to provide support and education to family and friends of Veterans, who are trying to get a Veteran into care. Over time, she will also be assisting with the Post Deployment Mental Health Study (PDMH) study and the Home program.

Publications

Journal Articles

Baker, CA, Hurley RA, Taber KH. *Update on Obstructive Sleep Apnea: Implications for Neuropsychiatry.* Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience. 2016; 28 (3): A6-159.

Calhoun PS, Datta S, Olsen M, Smith VA, Moore SD, Hair LP, Dedert EA, Kirby A, Dennis M, Beckham JC, Bastian LA. *Comparative Effectiveness of an Internet-Based Smoking Cessation Intervention Versus Clinic-Based Specialty Care for Veterans.* Journal of Substance Abuse and Treatment. 2016; 69: 19 - 27.

Dennis PA, Dedert EA, Van Voorhees EE, Watkins LL, Hayano J, Calhoun PS, Sherwood A, Dennis MF, Beckham JC. *Examining the Crux of Autonomic Dysfunction in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Whether Chronic or Situational Distress Underlies Elevated Heart Rate and Attenuated Heart Rate Variability.* Psychosomatic Medicine. 2016; 78(7): 805 - 809.

Hultman R, Mague SD, Li Q, Katz BM, Michel N, Lin L, Wang J, David LK, Blount C, Chandy R, Carlson D, Ulrich K, Carin L, Dunson D, Kumar S, Deisseroth K, Moore SD, Dzirasa K. *Dysregulation of Prefrontal Cortex-Mediated Slow-Evolving Limbic Dynamics Drives Stress-Induced Emotional Pathology.* Neuron. 2016 Jul 20;91(2):439-52

Highlights

- Prefrontal cortex (PFC) oscillations synchronize with ultraslow limbic dynamics
- PFC unit firing signals the synchronization state of amygdala (AMY) and ventral tegmental area (VTA)
- Chronic stress selectively disrupts PFC-dependent regulation of AMY-VTA synchrony
- PFC to AMY circuit stimulation recovers normal network function and behavior

SUMMARY: Circuits distributed across cortico-limbic brain regions compose the networks that mediate emotional behavior. The prefrontal cortex (PFC) regulates ultraslow (<1 Hz) dynamics across these networks, and PFC dysfunction is implicated in stress-related illnesses including major depressive disorder (MDD). To uncover the mechanism whereby stress-induced changes in PFC circuitry alter emotional networks to yield pathology, we used a multi-disciplinary approach including in vivo recordings in mice and chronic social defeat stress. Our network model, inferred using machine learning, linked stress-induced behavioral pathology to the capacity of PFC to synchronize amygdala and VTA activity. Direct stimulation of PFC-amygdala circuitry with DREADDs normalized PFC-dependent limbic synchrony in stress-susceptible animals and restored normal behavior. In addition to providing insights into MDD mechanisms, our findings demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach that can be used to identify the large-scale network changes that underlie complex emotional pathologies and the specific network nodes that can be used to develop targeted interventions.

Klein R, Acheson S, Qadri L, Dawson A, Rodriguiz R, Wetsel W, Moore SD, Laskowitz D, Dawson H. *Opposing effects of traumatic brain injury on excitatory synaptic function in the lateral amygdala in the absence and presence of pre-injury stress.* Journal of Neuroscience Research. 2016; 94(6): 579 - 589.

Martindale SL, Morissette SB, Kimbrel NA, Meyer EC, Kruse MI, Gulliver SB, Dolan SL. *Neuropsychological functioning, coping, and quality of life among returning war veterans.* Rehabilitation Psychology. 2016; 61(3), 231-239.

Wilson SM, Hair LP, Hertzberg JS, Kirby AC, Olsen MK, Lindquist JH, Maciejewski ML, Beckham JC, Calhoun PS. *Abstinence Reinforcement Therapy (ART) for rural veterans: Methodology for an mHealth smoking cessation intervention.* Contemporary Clinical Trials. 2016 50: 157 - 165.

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: Stress vs Performance

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 anyone who needs help with upsetting feelings. Trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress can benefit.

Parenting: Positive Communication

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

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

CBOC Mental Health Rounds

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

Treating SUDs in a Community Setting

Wednesday Sept 14 from 9-10 am ET & Thursday Sept 15 from 12-1 pm ET

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

October 12 & 13	***TBI/Toolkit***
November 9 & 10	***Ethics and Service Animals***
December 14 & 15	***PTSD and Insomnia***

If you require assistance contact:
EES Program Manager - Tim.Walsh2@va.gov or
Education Tech - Jessica.Denno@va.gov

PACERS: Program for Advancing Cognitive disorders Education for Rural Staff

NEW in TMS ***Dementia and Driving*** **Web-Based Training**

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.

Online Military Culture Training for Community Providers

http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture

It's important that all who care for Veterans have a basic understanding of military culture. In the interest of the highest quality, most compassionate health care for our Nation's Veterans, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense launched an online course available at no cost to all Veteran care providers.

Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals

This course stems from research, surveys and hundreds of hours of interviews with Service members and Veterans. It is designed as a comprehensive training in military culture for seasoned practitioners as well as for those less familiar with military populations. The interactive course includes a self-assessment to help providers better understand the biases they may unknowingly have that may be impacting the care they are providing to Veterans and their families. It also includes a variety of vignettes and candid video testimonials to highlight the meaning of military cultural competence.

Treating the Invisible Wounds of War

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.ahecconnect.com/citizensoldier

Click on New Users to register. You will then see the available 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 CivilianWorkforce***
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***

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www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6

MIRECC Leadership

Director
John Fairbank, PhD
john.fairbank2@va.gov

Deputy Director
Mira Brancu, PhD
mira.brancu@va.gov

Associate Director - Education
Robin A. Hurley, MD
robin.hurley@va.gov

Associate Director - Clinical
R. Keith Shaw, PhD
keith.shaw@va.gov

Assistant Director - Education
Katherine H. Taber, PhD
katherine.taber@va.gov

Co-Assistant Director - Clinical
Jennifer Naylor, PhD
jennifer.naylor2@va.gov

Nathan Kimbrel, PhD
nathan.kimbrel@va.gov

Co-Associate Directors - Research
Jean C. Beckham, PhD
jean.beckham@va.gov

Christine Marx, MD
marx0001@mc.duke.edu

Genetics
Jean C. Beckham, PhD
jean.beckham@va.gov

Interventions & Metabolomics
Christine Marx, MD
marx0001@mc.duke.edu

Health Services
Patrick Calhoun, PhD
patrick.calhoun2@va.gov

Neurocognition
Larry A. Tupler, PhD
larry.tupler@va.gov

Neuroimaging
Rajendra A. Morey, MD
morey@biac.duke.edu

Neuroscience
Scott D. Moore, MD, PhD
scott.moore2@va.gov

VISN Leadership

VISN 6 Director
Daniel F. Hoffmann, FACHE

MIRECC Fellowships

Special Fellowship for Physicians

Durham VAMC site
Christine Marx, MD
marx0001@mc.duke.edu

Salisbury VAMC site
Robin Hurley, MD
robin.hurley@va.gov

Special Fellowship for Psychology/Allied Health

Durham VAMC site
Patrick Calhoun, PhD
patrick.calhoun2@va.gov

Richmond VAMC site
Treven Pickett, PsyD
treven.pickett@va.gov
Scott McDonald, PhD
scott.mcdonald@va.gov

Salisbury VAMC site
Kristin Humphrey, PhD
kristin.humphrey@va.gov

Research Sites & Contacts

Durham VAMC
Study Coordinator
mireccstudies@va.gov
919-416-5915

Richmond VAMC
Robin Lumpkin
robin.lumpkin@va.gov
804-675-5000 ext 4251

Salisbury VAMC
Mary Peoples
mary.peoples1@va.gov
704-638-9000 ext 2956