

VISN 4 MIRECC Bulletin

Highlights of recent activity and accomplishments of our MIRECC faculty

Announcements

Volume 2, Issue 2

VISN 4 MIRECC Celebrates 10 Years!

This fiscal year marks the 10th Anniversary of the VISN 4 MIRECC. The MIRECC will be celebrating by sponsoring special activities and commemorative communications in honor of this decade milestone!

Organizational News

Please join us in welcoming the newest staff members in Pittsburgh:

In January, **Mary Lindsey Smith, MSW, PhD** began the *VA Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment* sponsored by the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). Dr. Smith recently received her doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. Her research interests include substance abuse among older adults with a specific research focus on problems that emerge from the concurrent use of alcohol and medications.

Govner Thorp recently joined the MIRECC as a Research Recruiter. Prior to coming to VAPHS, Govner worked at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic in Pittsburgh for 16 years, most recently as a Research Specialist and Case Manager. Mr. Thorp is also a veteran of the U.S. Army.

Please also join us in congratulating the following staff with new positions in Philadelphia:

Erin Ingram, BA, has been promoted to Senior Coordinator of the BHL and Senior Research Coordinator for the MIRECC.

Jesse Suh, PsyD, has officially joined the Philadelphia site of the MIRECC as a Clinical Research Psychologist and Investigator in the Neuroimaging Core. Dr. Suh received his doctorate degree in clinical psychology from Long Island University. He completed a National Institute of Health-funded Postdoctoral Fellowship in Addictions at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Studies of Addiction, where he is currently on the faculty and conducts neuroimaging research on substance use and comorbid conditions.

Award

Wade Berrettini, MD, PhD, received a National Alliance for Schizophrenia and Depression Distinguished Investigator Award, 2009 for a study entitled, *Ankyrin 3 Variants in Bipolar Disorder*.

Research Accomplishments/News

Shahzad Mavandadi, PhD, Grant Award: *VISN 2 Telephone-Based Care Management and Caregiver Education for Dementia*, Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care

The main objective of this clinical demonstration project is to evaluate the feasibility and outcomes of a telephone-based, patient-centered dementia care facilitation program provided to veterans and their family caregivers (CGs) in VISN 2 via collaboration with the VISN 4 MIRECC Behavioral Health Laboratory (BHL). The care management program is designed to facilitate service connection and provide both education and psychosocial support for individuals caring for veterans with dementia. Care management in this program will involve regular and extended collaboration among family CGs, PCPs, and care managers.

Steven Sayers, PhD, Grant Award: *Complicated Family Reintegration in OEF-OIF Veterans*, HSR&D VA Merit

This is a 4-year study funded by HSR&D to examine whether the presence of psychiatric problems of returning veterans complicates the family reintegration process of veterans returning from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The plan is to recruit in the Philadelphia area over 200 married/partnered military veterans who served in the OEF-OIF conflicts within 2 years of return from deployment and interview them twice over a 1 year time period. At the initial assessment, we will assess the symptoms of veterans, family reintegration problems, and test whether the process of family reintegration mediates the impact on subsequent levels of symptoms. Additional qualitative interviews with veterans and their spouses will provide more in-depth information about the process of family reintegration.

Matthew Chinman, PhD, Project Update: *VA Homeless Outcomes: A Model for Evaluation and Success (VA HOMES)*, National Center on Homelessness among Veterans

The VA HOMES project is a 3 year pilot study funded by the VA National Center on Homelessness among Veterans. The main goal of this study is to integrate an evidence-based framework called *Getting to Outcomes (GTO)* into the Comprehensive Homeless Center at VA Pittsburgh. GTO aims to help staff better plan, implement, and self-evaluate their own programming in order to improve their results. The Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program, the Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence Program and the Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program are each being trained to use the 10 steps of GTO to improve Veteran outcomes. Basic training in GTO was completed in December. Participants from each of the programs received technical assistance for developing GTO projects specific to their program. In addition, a Continuous Quality Improvement team will be established across the three groups. The VA HOMES study will evaluate the implementation of the GTO framework using focus groups and other data. As part of this research study, a program manual is being created for implementing GTO in the VA system.

Selected Recent Publications

Rotondi, AJ. *Internet technology to support ongoing recovery from severe mental illness*. In: Using Technology to Support Evidence-Based Behavioral Health Practices: A Clinician's Guide. Michael A. Cucciare, PhD, Kenneth R. Weingardt, PhD, Eds., Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group), 2009. p. 69-89.

Lybrand J, **Caroff S**. Management of schizophrenia with substance use disorders. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*. 2009. 32:821-833.

Gordon AJ, Liberto J, Granda S, **Salmon-Cox S**, Andrée T, **McNicholas L**. Physician training is never a failure. *The American Journal on Addictions*. 2009;18(4):337-338.

Selected Education Activities

Upcoming Events:

VA Grand Rounds at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC): The MIRECC annual slot in the WPIC Grand Round Series brings veteran-related issues to a primarily non-VA clinician audience. **James Tew, MD** is taking the lead in organizing this presentation in Pittsburgh on March 5, 2010.

The Behavioral Health Laboratory

Answering the Call for Primary Care/
Behavioral Health Integration at the VA

Recent Events:

Evidence-Based Intervention DVDs

We are pleased to announce that we have had many requests for the recently produced 4-DVD set containing presentations from the June 2006 *Evidence-Based Interventions for Suicidal Persons Conference* held in Atlantic City, NJ, a collaboration of the VISN 3, VISN 4, and VISN 19 Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (MIRECCs), the VISN 2 Center of Excellence (COE), the Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Education System, and the Chesapeake Health Education Program, Inc. (CHEP). The DVDs include national leaders in the areas of *Pharmacologic Interventions* (Herbert Meltzer, J. John Mann), the *Consumer Perspective* (Fred Frese), *Interpersonal Psychotherapy* (Mark Miller), *Dialectical Behavior Therapy* (Beth Brodsky) and *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy/Latest Research Findings* (Gregory Brown, Amy Wenzel).

Copies of the DVD set were distributed nationally to VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators and the MIRECC Education Group. The DVD containing Fred Frese's *Consumer Perspective* presentation was sent to Local Recovery Coordinators.

To request a copy of the DVDs, contact Sara Chapman, MS, OTR/L at sara.chapman@va.gov.

Did you know... ?

**...that the VISN 4 MIRECC is currently in the process of overhauling our website.
Keep a look out for the new and improved site!**

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