

# MIRECC Matters

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## Letter from the Acting Director

*Lisa Dixon, M.D., M.P.H.*



It is a time of change for our MIRECC. Over the last month, Dr. Alan Bellack, MIRECC Director since its inception in 1999, retired from this position. Dr. Bellack plans to stay connected to our VA activities and will continue his role as principal investigator of his merit review that focuses on the Maryland Assessment of Recovery scale. Dr. Bellack will also continue as a mentor and scientific colleague, maintaining his position as Director of the Division of Psychology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry.

We are all grateful for Dr. Bellack's leadership, and we will have the opportunity to celebrate his accomplishments at events over the next month. I am personally grateful to Dr. Bellack for being a tremendous colleague and friend.

Dr. Bellack's transition created an opportunity and challenge that I am excited to pursue. I am delighted that I have been appointed Acting MIRECC Director. Having been Director of the Research Core for a decade and more recently Deputy MIRECC Director, I feel I am very well prepared for this new role. My initial goal will be to maintain the forward momentum of our cadre of committed clinicians, educators and researchers, to strengthen our relationships with clinical programs and staff within the VISN, and to work closely with leadership at VACO to ensure that we are adjusting promptly and properly to central needs.

The recent External Advisory Committee provided an opportunity for us to review the MIRECC's current status and obtain feedback from our advisors regarding how to move forward. We had the privilege of hosting Dr. Sonja Batten, formerly one of our own, who is now Assistant Deputy Chief Patient Care Services Officer at VACO. Drs. Stephen Marder and Greer Sullivan, Directors of VISN 22 and 16 MIRECC, respectively, and Dr. Marcia Valenstein, lead investigator at the SMITREC, attended the meeting.

The initial session of the advisory meeting permitted us to highlight current accomplishments. We have leveraged our funds such that every MIRECC dollar generates four times that in external grants and contracts. Transitions were a prominent theme, as Dr. Maria Llorente, who assumed the role of Assistant Chief of Staff, Mental Health Service at the Washington DC VA last August shared her enthusiasm for the collaboration with MIRECC. Dr. Llorente discussed the value of the consultation provided by Sophia Autrey, MPH, VISN 5 MIRECC's Research Program Evaluator, regarding the inpatient psychiatric service and how Sophia's input has helped the unit develop programming for patients that appears to be generating immediate results. We also welcomed Dr. Marsden McGuire who recently became the Acting Director of the Mental Health Clinical Center in the VAMHCS. Dr. McGuire has welcomed MIRECC leadership to the regular VAMHCS

*Continued on page 2*

# Letter from the Acting Director

*(continued from page 1)*

problem-solving meetings. Our attendance at these meetings has enhanced our knowledge of VAMHCS challenges and permitted increased exchange about how MIRECC can be helpful, as well as alerting MIRECC staff to possible research and other opportunities. Finally, at the VISN level, an initial meeting with the new VISN 5 Director, Mr. Fernando Rivera, appointed in December, 2010, was followed by an invitation to present vital information on mental health service utilization to a meeting of top VISN brass.

Dr. Batten has exhorted each of the Centers of Excellence and MIRECC's to have a clear vision and scope. Our MIRECC has focused on those with serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. In our research, educational and clinical activities, we pursue a community-based, clinical approach to understanding the life circumstances and impacts of current treatments on individuals living with these illnesses. Informed by our patients and families, as well as clinicians, our goals are to adapt existing treatments and create new treatments that have the potential to impact quality of life and functioning directly. Dr. Robert Buchanan, Professor of Psychiatry, who assumed the role of Acting Director of the Research Core, highlighted how a focus on different illness dimensions will facilitate our identifying new ways to identify treatment targets to promote recovery. He shared his vision of connecting our community-based approach with findings from neuroscience. The research core presentations featured the work of new MIRECC investigators, Drs. Rebecca Wald, Seth Himelhoch, and Amy Drapalski. Exciting new projects focusing on self-stigma and using new technologies were featured.

“We have leveraged our funds such that every MIRECC dollar generates four times that in external grants and contracts...Our MIRECC is at an exciting juncture.”

The day concluded with presentations from our new Education and Clinical Core directors. Dr. Richard Goldberg has shifted from directing the Clinical Core to directing the Education Core, assuming a new set of well earned responsibilities. Dr. Goldberg now leads the national VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation Training Program (VA-PRT), which includes the VA Social Skills Training (VA-SST) for Serious Mental Illness, and provides training, technical support and consultation to VA staff practitioners, Veteran peer providers and mental health program leaders working with seriously mentally ill Veterans and their families. The Program also serves as the Hub Site for the VA Interprofessional Fellowship Program in Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery. We are especially proud of Dr. Goldberg's receipt of the 2011 Armin Loeb award, given by the United States Psychosocial Rehabilitation Association (USPRA). This prestigious national award recognizes Dr. Goldberg's contribution to research in psychiatric rehabilitation. Dr. Goldberg also talked about the exciting day of conference programming he organized for the Annual USPRA Conference focusing on the VA recovery-oriented policies and initiatives and the range of related programming offered across the full continuum of care. Dr. Himelhoch, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, has recently assumed the role of Acting Director of the Clinical Core. Dr. Himelhoch's clinical and research experiences have focused on access to care and treatment of co-occurring psychiatric and drug use disorders among individuals with HIV. He has experience directing outpatient mental health and substance abuse services, providing clinic and patient level site evaluations, as well as receiving grant funding from NIMH, NIDA, CDC and SAMSHA. Currently, he is working with Sophia Autrey, MPH, who has been invaluable as a consultant to numerous clinical services in the VISN.

Our MIRECC is at an exciting juncture. We have the opportunity to move forward with new partners and a refined vision at the same time as we can rely on the solid support of past leadership.

## A Recap of the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association Conference

*Richard Goldberg, PhD*

The USPRA conference combines a stimulating mixture of theoretical and practical learning sessions organized in content areas that address numerous aspects of psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery oriented service delivery. This year's conference, held in Boston between June 13<sup>th</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>, was attended by more than 1,900 people and included a record number of Veterans and others affiliated with the Department of Veteran Affairs. The conference also offered a record number of programs and workshops showcasing the expanding leadership the VA has demonstrated in developing psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery-oriented services for Veterans with psychiatric disabilities.

The VISN 5 MIRECC made several important contributions to this year's conference including:

1) A full day program focusing on VA recovery-oriented policies and initiatives and programs. Organized by Richard Goldberg, Ph.D., Associate Director, Education Core, this program included an overview of national VA policies and initiatives in place to help transform the national VA mental health system into one dedicated to implementing recovery-oriented and psychosocial rehabilitation services. David Carroll, Ph.D., Director of Recovery Services, Dan O'Brien-Mazza, MS., National Director, VA Peer Support Services, and Mary Beth Shea, Ph.D., a Local Recovery Coordinator in Florida now currently on detail in the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services (PSR&R) Section of the VA National Office of Mental Health, were all part of the panel delivering this important component of the event. The program also included presentations focusing on innovative exam-

ples of recovery-oriented services across the VA continuum of care (from inpatient- and residential- to community-based services). Several fellows and faculty affiliated with the VA Interprofessional Fellowship Program in Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery (VA PSR Fellowship) contributed to this well attended program. Dr. Goldberg, who has served as Director of the Hub Site overseeing this fellowship program for the last four years, served as moderator and discussant.

2) A pre-conference Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) workshop for VA PSR fellows from across the seven fellowship programs. Samuel Korobkin, Ph.D., who with assistance and support from the VISN 5 MIRECC, is an Advanced Certified WRAP facilitator, led the workshop and offered fellows a comprehensive overview of WRAP and discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with delivering WRAP in the VA.

3) A 90 minute workshop, delivered by Alicia Lucksted, Ph.D., a VISN 5 Investigator, on a program of research evaluating the NAMI Family to Family Program.

4) A poster session, supported in part by the VISN 5 MIRECC, that included posters from several VA PSR fellows showcasing their contributions to the delivery of recovery-oriented services across the VHA.

*For additional information about the VISN 5 MIRECC contributions to the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual USPRA Conference, contact Richard Goldberg, PhD, at [Rgoldber@psych.umaryland.edu](mailto:Rgoldber@psych.umaryland.edu).*

VISN 5 MIRECC made several important contributions to this year's USPRA conference.

## Reducing Internalized Stigma in Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

*Amy Drapalski, PhD, and Alicia Lucksted, PhD*

Stigmatizing beliefs and attitudes about mental illnesses are prevalent and exposure to stigma is common among Veterans with serious mental illness (SMI). The negative effects of stigma are compounded when an individual with SMI internalizes these stigmatizing assumptions and stereotypes. "Internalized stigma" or "self-stigma" refers to the process by which a person with mental illness cognitively or emotionally absorbs negative messages or stereotypes about having a mental illness and comes to believe them and apply them to him or herself. Internalized stigma can, in turn, contribute to depression and demoralization, increased isolation, reduced motivation, and limited pursuit of recovery and life goals.

Over the past several years several MIRECC investigators in collaboration with investigators at the University of Maryland and the San Francisco VAMC developed Ending Self Stigma (ESS), a 9-session group intervention designed to help individuals with serious mental illnesses develop cognitive and behavioral skills to cope effectively with societal stigma and discrimination, minimize internalization of these negative stereotypes and beliefs, and reduce existing self-stigma. Drawing on principles and techniques from research on mental health stigma, other internalized stigmas, cognitive-behavioral and behavioral therapy, and empowerment and recovery principles, the goal of the group is to help group members learn different tools or strategies that can be used to address

self-stigma.

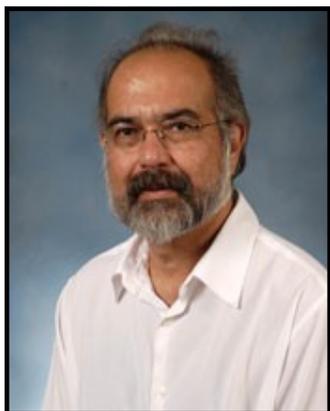
MIRECC investigators, Dr. Amy Drapalski and Dr. Alicia Lucksted, have both received grants, one a MERIT review award from the Health Services Research and Development Service (Dr. Drapalski) and one a R01 award from the National Institute of Mental Health (Dr. Lucksted), to examine the effectiveness of the Ending Self Stigma Intervention in reducing self-stigma among individuals with serious mental illness. The VA HSR&D funded study will involve Veterans receiving outpatient mental health services in the VAMHCS. Participants will be randomly assigned to participate in either ESS or a general health and wellness group focused on providing education and support related to the management of physical and emotional well-being. The NIMH funded study will be conducted at several community-based psychosocial rehabilitation programs in Maryland. Participants involved in this project will either receive ESS or continue with their current services. The goal of these projects is to determine if participation in ESS helps to reduce self stigma, improve short-term and long-term psychosocial outcomes (e.g., recovery status, social functioning, quality of life), and lead to greater participation in treatment.

*For more information, contact Drs. Amy Drapalski at [Amy.Drapalski@va.gov](mailto:Amy.Drapalski@va.gov) or Alicia Lucksted at [Aluckste@umaryland.edu](mailto:Aluckste@umaryland.edu).*

## Congratulations!

**Alicia Lucksted, PhD**, received the U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association's (USPRA), Multicultural Committee's 2011 GLBT Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was presented at the 36th Annual USPRA Conference in Boston, MA.

## Meet a MIRECC Investigator



**AN INTERVIEW WITH GUNI THAKER, MD**

**Guni Thaker, MD**, is a VISN 5 MIRECC Research Investigator. Dr. Thaker received his medical degree in India from the Baroda Medical College. He completed his residency training in psychiatry in Detroit at the Lafayette Clinic, Wayne State University, and research fellowship at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, University of Maryland School of Medicine. Dr. Thaker joined the MIRECC part time in 2003 and increased his involvement last year. He provides valuable expertise to the VISN 5 MIRECC.

### **Tell us about your area of research/expertise.**

Psychiatric diagnostic system has not served us well for identifying genetic causes and understanding etiopathophysiological pathways partly because of their heterogeneous nature and ill defined boundaries. This has hindered development of novel pharmacological agents. My research is focused on identifying physiological deficits that are stable, heritable, and associated with the risk for psychotic disorders, and use such measures as alternative phenotypes in genetic study.

### **What studies (MIRECC and non-MIRECC) are you currently working on?**

An ongoing study examines a battery of alternative phenotypes in families of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder probands with psychosis. The study is part of the Bipolar and Schizophrenia Network on Intermediate Phenotypes (B-SNIP) led by the Baltimore site. The study will collect 1000 families and control subjects and examine the extent of overlap in etiology and pathophysiology between the two major psychotic disorders.

Another study is focused on refining the smooth pursuit eye movement phenotype. Normally, humans initiate pursuit of a moving object by processing motion of the image on retina

and generating smooth pursuit eye movements. However, such a response inherently results in a lag between the moving object and the eye. Once the target behavior is known, the oculomotor system makes predictive eye movements so that the image of the moving object remains on the fovea (without any lag). Predictive pursuit is abnormal in schizophrenia, possibly due to impaired communication between the posterior visual cortical region, where motion percept is mediated, and the frontal eye fields that drives the smooth pursuit eye movements. By obtaining electroencephalographic (EEG) recordings while subjects are performing smooth pursuit eye movement task, we are examining the functional connectivity between the anterior and posterior brain regions. Preliminary findings suggest abnormal connectivity in schizophrenia.

### **What are the implications or potential benefits of your research?**

The second set of studies will help identify physiological specific deficit that occur in schizophrenia. Future studies will be carried out in the B-SNIP sample to examine whether this deficit is heritable and mark psychosis/schizophrenia risk. This line of work will help identify risk genes associated with individual physiological deficits in schizophrenia, and subsequently provide novel direction for drug development that target the physiological impairment and the associated clinical symptoms.

### **How did you get started in this area of research?**

I became interested in research because during my psychiatric residency training it became quickly clear that our field has not much to offer in terms of effective treatments for the major psychiatric disorders. This is particularly true for schizophrenia.

### **What advice would you give to junior investigators and to people who are new to research?**

One, it is exciting times with rapid development of technology. This also makes it important that investigators early in their career adopt and master some of these new techniques. Two, today's science requires multidisciplinary approach. Thus, identifying and maintaining collaborations with other experts is more critical now than 10-20 years ago. Three, design studies such that at the end of the study there is clear answer- positive or negative, both of which are valuable and advance knowledge.

### **How can people get in touch with you if they have questions about your work?**

Best way to reach me is by email:

[Gthaker@mprc.umaryland.edu](mailto:Gthaker@mprc.umaryland.edu)

## Celebrating “Mental Health Month” at the VAMHCS

*Cindy Clark, RN, C, CD*

Given that the month of May is designated as "Mental Health Month", the VISN 5 MIRECC and staff from the Mental Health Clinical Service line organized activities to encourage awareness of mental health recovery and services available to Veterans. Below is a list of activities that were held at the Baltimore and Perry Point campuses of the VAMHCS.

On Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, Virtual Voices workshop was presented at the Perry Point VA Medical Center. There were 14 staff members who took part in the workshop and provided very positive feedback about the experience.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, there was a veteran panel discussion about the recovery experience presented in the BT VA Medical Center auditorium. A recov-

ery power point was presented and case managers from HUD VASH and CHEP Housing programs discussed information and answered questions about their respective programs. There were 32 attendees. Informational brochures and posters from various MH programs were displayed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor balcony at lunchtime. On May 26<sup>th</sup>, the same program was offered at the Perry Point VA Medical Center in building 364 dining room with 34 attendees. Informational literature was displayed in building 361.

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the Perry Point VA Medical Center clinical center staff hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> annual "Mental Health Awareness Walk" for veterans and VA staff. Approximately 53 participants took part in the walk.

## Farewell and Good Luck

**Monica Mann-Wrobel, PhD**, left the VISN 5 MIRECC for a clinical psychologist position at the Durham VA Medical Center in North Carolina. This position is part of a new program for the families of returning service members called Families at Ease. Monica began working with the VISN 5 MIRECC in January of 2004 as a pre-doctoral fellow on the Schizophrenia Research Training Program at the University of Maryland, College Park. She conducted her dissertation research, Error Observation in Schizophrenia, under the mentorship of Dr. Sarah Morris and was awarded a National Research Service Award from NIMH for this project. She also served as a psychology extern with the VISN 5 MIRECC for two years before completing her internship here at the VA Maryland Health Care System/University of Maryland School of Medicine Psychology Internship Consortium. Finally, she completed a year and a half of post-doctoral training as a VISN 5 MIRECC post-doctoral fellow during which time she submitted several manuscripts for publication and furthered her clinical training with the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy program.

VISN 5 MIRECC Research Assistants **Jade Lubben, BA**, and **Shyon Loo, MS**, recently left the MIRECC. They were responsible for a number of research studies at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. Ms. Lubben is now the Clinical Cancer Research Coordinator at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, AZ. Mr. Loo is currently working with patients with TBI and spinal cord injuries in Singapore.

## Recent MIRECC Publications

**Buchanan, R. W.**, Keefe, R. S., Lieberman, J. A., Barch, D. M., Csernansky, J. G., Goff, D. C., Gold, J. M., Green, M. F., Jarskog, L. F., Javitt, D. C., Kimhy, D., Kraus, M. S., McEvoy, J. P., Mesholam-Gately, R. I., Seidman, L. J., Ball, M. P., McMahon, R. P., Kern, R. S., Robinson, J., & Marder, S. R. (2011). A randomized clinical trial of MK-0777 for the treatment of cognitive impairments in people with schizophrenia. *Biological Psychiatry*, 69(5), 442-449.

**Drapalski, A. L., Bennett, M., & Bellack, A. S.** (2011). Gender differences in substance use, consequences, motivation to change, and treatment seeking in people with serious mental illness. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 46(6), 808-818.

Hong, L. E., Schroeder, M., Ross, T. J., Buchholz, B., Salmeron, B. J., Wonodi, I., **Thaker, G. K.**, & Stein E. A. (2011). Nicotine enhances but does not normalize visual sustained attention and the associated brain network in schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 37(2), 416-25.

Lewis, R., Adler, D. A., **Dixon, L. B.**, Goldman, B., Hackman, A. L., Oslin, D. W., Siris, S. G., & Valenstein, M. (2011). The psychiatric note in the era of electronic communication. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 199(4), 212-13.

Young, A. S., Niv, N., Chinman, M., **Dixon, L.**, Eisen, S. V., Fischer, E. P., Smith, J., Valenstein, M., Marder, S. R., & Owen, R. R. (2011). Routine outcomes monitoring to support improving care for schizophrenia: Report from the VA Mental Health QUERI. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 47(2), 123-35.

### **MIRECC Matters is also available online:**

[www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/newsletter.asp](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/newsletter.asp)

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is my last issue editing *MIRECC Matters*. It is also my last month with the VISN 5 MIRECC.

It was a pleasure spreading the word about the numerous activities generated by colleagues and staff at the VISN 5 MIRECC. A new editor for *MIRECC Matters* will be named prior to the next issue, which will be published September 2011.

On a personal note, it has been a privilege working with all of you. Not only did I edit *MIRECC Matters*, I was also primarily responsible for and assisted with numerous programs and activities within the MIRECC Education Core, the Hub Site for the national VA Interprofessional Fellowship Program in Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery, and the VA Social Skills Training Program for Serious Mental Illness. I am grateful for the friendships, the mentorship, and the professional opportunities provided to me during my time in the VISN 5 MIRECC and VAMHCS. I will be moving back to Texas to be closer to family but will be staying within the VA system (El Paso VA Medical Center). Hope to cross paths with many of you as the VA is a small world. Warm regards, Becky.

## Presentations by VISN 5 MIRECC

VISN 5 MIRECC staff participated and presented at various settings, including international and national conferences. Below is a list of conference presentations by VISN 5 MIRECC staff (in **bold**).

**Buchanan, R. W.**, Boggs, D. L., Conley, R. R., Gorelick, D. A., McMahon, R. P., Gold, J. M., Linthicum, J., Huestis, M. A., Liu, F., & Kelly, D.L. (2011, April). *A Pilot Study Evaluating the Cognitive Effects of Rimonabant in People with Schizophrenia*. Presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

**Dixon, L.** (2011, January). *The Science of Self-Help: A Randomized Trial of the NAMI Family to Family Education Program*. Grand Rounds at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C.

**Dixon, L.** (2011, March). *Improving the Quality of Mental Health Care*. Grand Rounds at Essex County Hospital, Essex, NJ.

**Dixon, L., Lucksted, A.**, Burland, J., Stewart, B., **Medoff, D.**, Lehman, A., Sturm, V., & Fang, L. (2011, April). *A Randomized Trial of the Effectiveness of the NAMI Family to Family Education Program. Pathways to care and novel psychosocial treatments for schizophrenia*. Presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

**Drapalski, A. L., Bellack, A., Medoff, D.**, Unick, J., Velligan, D., & **Dixon, L.** (2011, April). *Assessing Recovery in People with Serious Mental Illness*. Poster presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

**Fischer, B. A., Buchanan, R. W.**, Osing, J., Holcomb, H. H., & Rowland, L. M. (2011, April). *Glutamate concentrations in the anterior cingulate vary based on past alcohol use*. Presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

Keller, W. R., **Fischer, B. A.**, Meyer, W., Reed, M., Blake, M., McMahon, R., & **Buchanan, R. W.** (2011, April). *Second generation antipsychotics in community treatment for schizophrenia*. Presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

**Thaker, G. K.** (2011, April). *Recent Findings in the Genetics of Schizophrenia*. Chaired oral presentation session at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

**Thaker, G. K.**, Krishna, N., Hong, E., O'Neill, H., Sanchez, E. (2011, April). *Refining the Smooth Pursuit Endophenotype: Long range Frontal/posterior Phase Synchronization during Eye Tracking*. Poster presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

Wehring, H., Kelly, D. L., McMahon, R. P., Bordnick, P., **Bellack, A.**, Holcomb, H. H., **Fischer, B. A.**, Rowland, L. M., Turner, H., Taylor, R., Liu, F., & Heishman, S. J. (2011, April). *Assessment of tobacco craving in smokers with schizophrenia using virtual reality*. Presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Schizophrenia Research, Colorado Springs, CO.

## Upcoming Events

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### MONTHLY CONSULTATION SEMINAR

First Thursday of every month

1:00 - 2:00 PM

MIRECC conference room, 6th floor, Suite 6A

or call 1-800-767-1750, code 79846

Psychopharmacology Case Conference: **All VISN Clinicians are invited to attend** this conference and to bring questions about a difficult or challenging psychopharmacology case. Note that the topic of the conference has been expanded from a focus only on metabolic side effects of antipsychotic medications to include all areas of psychopharmacology. The MIRECC Case Conference facilitators are Robert Buchanan, MD, MIRECC investigator and Professor of Psychiatry at the UMB School of Medicine; Julie Kreyenbuhl, PharmD, PhD, MIRECC investigator and Associate Professor in the UMB Department of Psychiatry; Neil Sandson, MD, inpatient attending psychiatrist in the VAMHCS and MIRECC staff member.

### RECOVERY-ORIENTED SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Application Deadlines for 2011: 1st of March, June, September, & December

Small Grant Amount: \$300-\$5000

The VISN 5 MIRECC offers a small grant mechanism to fund recovery-oriented clinical and educational innovations in response to the VA's Action Agenda to transform VA mental health services to a recovery model. This program especially encourages (but is not limited to) proposals such as: creating, adopting, launching or expanding recovery-oriented clinical or self-help projects, new programs to educate staff, Veterans, and/or family members of Veterans about mental health recovery models, or specific recovery-oriented services/programs. For more information or to receive an application, please contact:

Alicia Lucksted, PhD

MIRECC Recovery Coordinator

410-706-3244

[Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov](mailto:Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov)

### VA SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

August 16-17, 2011

Baltimore, MD

The VISN 5 MIRECC is training staff on the delivery of Social Skills Training for Veterans with schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses (schizoaffective, bipolar, and treatment refractory depression). This is a national initiative being led by the Office of Mental Health Services. Individuals in all VISNs are invited to participate. For this training initiative, only clinicians working with Veterans with SMI (as defined above) are asked to apply. Please direct all questions and application requests, including upcoming workshop dates, to:

Matthew Wiley, MPH

VA Social Skills Training Program Coordinator

[Matthew.Wiley@va.gov](mailto:Matthew.Wiley@va.gov)

### 5TH ANNUAL VHA MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

*Improving Veterans Mental Health Care for the 21st Century*

August 23 - 25, 2011

Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel

700 Aliceana Street

Baltimore, MD 21202

This meeting will allow for two and a half days of information sharing among mental health professionals and administrators on the current state of implementation of the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook, new clinical initiatives, research-informed practices, as well as best practices identified by clinicians in the field. Conference registration is now closed.



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