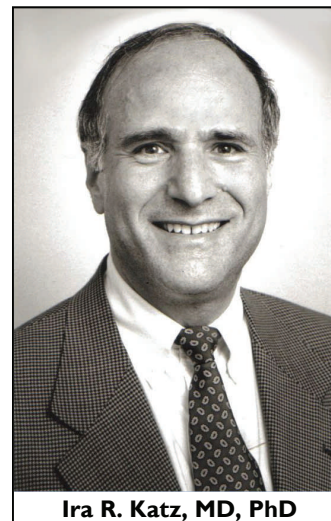


New Leadership in Mental Health

by Ira R. Katz, MD, PhD

It's been just a few months since I became Deputy Chief Patient Care Services (PCS) Officer for Mental Health and the Director of the Office of Mental Health Services. In this time there have been significant changes in leadership of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). However, the VA remains firmly committed to the principle that mental health is an important part of overall health.

There have been dramatic increases in recent years in VHA's funding of and commitment to mental health services. For this, it is important to acknowledge leadership at the highest levels of the VHA. For some years, Jonathan Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, FACP, as Under Secretary for Health, and Michael Kussman, MD, MS, MACP, as Principal Deputy Under Secretary, have staunchly supported treating Mental Health with the same urgency as other components of health in a system dedicated to care that is safe, effective, efficient, and compassionate. They have been strong advocates of the VHA Comprehensive Mental Health Strategic Plan and have been responsible for the enhanced funding that is allowing the VA to fulfill its goals. Under their leadership, programs were created or expanded for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mental health care in Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC), Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF), substance abuse services, Mental Health Intensive Case



Ira R. Katz, MD, PhD

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Managements (MHICM), psychosocial rehabilitation, and others. They are committed to transforming the culture of Mental Health Services to one focused on Recovery.

Unfortunately, Dr. Perlin has left the VA. This is a real loss to the Department as a whole, and to those we serve. However, we are fortunate that Dr. Kussman is replacing him as the Acting Under Secretary. This represents continued direction from a team devoted to a value-based leadership that recognizes the importance of Mental Health, and is committed to it. In the role of Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Dr. Kussman has been replaced by Gerald Cross, MD, previously the Deputy Chief Officer for Patient Care Services. Dr.

(Continued on page 3)

MIRECCs Report Productivity and Develop Shared Database

by Michael Kauth, PhD

In December 2005, the MIRECCs began submitting brief semi-annual reports to VA Central Office for the purpose of rapidly informing Central Office about current projects and significant findings. The reporting template and procedure were developed by a committee representing each Center. At each reporting cycle, a MIRECC provides a short list of completed or ongoing projects, which include research on clinical innovations or quality improvement, clinical or health services research, basic science research, and educational initiatives. For each project, the MIRECCs provide investigator information, a brief abstract, a statement about the project's impact for VA or on veterans' health care, and a code for its relationship to the VA Mental Health Strategic Plan (MHSP). Each MIRECC also identifies 20 select publications. In addition, the Special Fellowship Hubsite reports on training initiatives and research among Fellows at the 10 Centers, and the Education Group reports on collaborative MIRECC activities, such as the newsletter, website, national conferences and workshops, and special projects (e.g., needs assessment for MyHealthVet).

The 10 MIRECC reports are entered into a database created and maintained by Emily Gere, PhD (VISN 21). The VISN 2 Center for Integrated Healthcare (CIH) has adopted a similar reporting mechanism and database. The two comprehensive MIRECC and CIH databases are made available to VA Central Office. These databases may be searched by "free text" or by designated fields. These databases allow VA Central Office to quickly respond to priority queries from, for example, the Secretary or Congressional committees about recent research, clinical, and educational activities by specially funded Centers, without needing to contact each of the 11 Centers (MIRECCs + CIH) and wait for responses.

The Reports Committee consists of Greer Sullivan, MD, MSPH (chair; VISN 16); Michael Kauth, PhD (VISN 16); Ruth O'Hara, PhD (VISN 21); and Ira Katz, MD, PhD (VACO). ♦

Advantages of Multi-Site Post-Doctoral Training Program in Mental Health: Experiences from the VA Fellowship in Advanced Psychiatry and Psychology

Ruth O'Hara, PhD, Heather L. Gray, BA, & Lisa T. Eyler, PhD

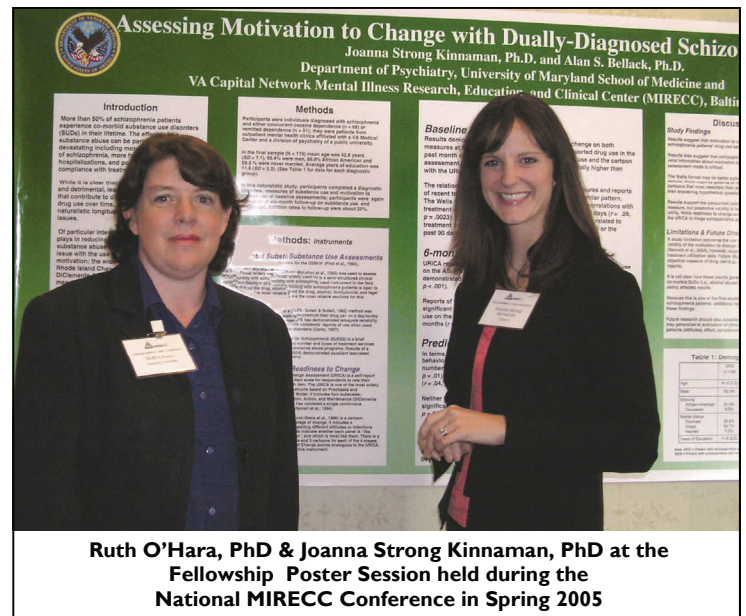
"Good science is an essential underpinning of the public health approach to mental health and mental illness" (Services, 2001). Well-trained mental health researchers are essential for leveraging advances in basic medical and behavioral science into improvements in public health (Sung et al., 2003). As a field, we must develop opportunities and provide the training to both induce and successfully transition young investigators into research careers. The VA MIRECC Special Fellowship in Advanced Psychiatry and Psychology is specifically tailored to the training of mental health researchers and provides the necessary training for young investigators to establish independent clinical research careers. Because of the variety of mental health foci and expertise across the MIRECCs, these centers present excellent research, education and clinical learning environments for the training of post-residency psychiatry and postdoctoral psychology Fellows.

In 2000, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations established the VA MIRECC Special Fellowship Program in Advanced Psychiatry and Psychology. The Fellowship program is currently offered at ten MIRECC sites across the United States. The Sierra Pacific MIRECC at Palo Alto serves as the coordinating site for this multi-site fellowship program. The coordinating site provides support for the development of a core curriculum offered through twice monthly videoconference seminars, recruitment, evaluation, and publicity.

Congratulations to Dr. Zeiss

Antonette Zeiss, PhD, Deputy Chief Consultant, Office of Mental Health Services, VA Central Office, was this year's recipient of the Award for the Advancement of Psychology and Aging. The award was presented to Dr. Zeiss by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Committee on Aging at the 2006 Annual APA convention in New Orleans. This award is presented to individuals for outstanding achievement in and significant contribution to the health and human welfare of aging adults. Dr. Zeiss, a long-time employee of the Veterans Health Administration, has had a lengthy career specializing in aging and age related issues. She has been a long-time advocate for expanding the scientific understanding of adult development and aging, and she has greatly influenced policy with respect to the delivery of psychological services to older persons. Dr. Zeiss is currently in VA Central Office working to address the mental health needs of all veterans, young and old. We offer our hearty congratulations to Dr. Zeiss on this proud achievement. ♦

Comprising three main training components (research, educational, and clinical training), the MIRECC Fellowship program combines individualized, mentored research and clinical training with a curriculum that emphasizes research methods, statistics, epidemiology, mental health systems, quality improvement methods, education, and service delivery. Through state-of-the-art training in mental health research, cutting-edge educational experiences, and advanced clinical training, Fellows are prepared to pursue entry-level leadership



Ruth O'Hara, PhD & Joanna Strong Kinnaman, PhD at the Fellowship Poster Session held during the National MIRECC Conference in Spring 2005

roles within the VA healthcare system and other academic institutions, and to submit applications for career development awards. To date, 46 Fellows (17 psychiatrists and 29 psychologists) have participated in the MIRECC Fellowship program. Of those who have graduated, some have entered academic clinical research positions within and outside the VA system and other Fellows have been awarded VA or NIH Career Development awards.

A unique aspect of the VA Special Fellowship Program in Advanced Psychiatry and Psychology, key to the program's success, is that it is offered at ten locations throughout the nation and yet offers a common structure and didactic component. Multi-site Fellowship training is of significant benefit for several reasons: 1) Effective training can be brought simultaneously to multiple sites and therefore to maximal numbers of Fellows; 2) A consensus-driven core curriculum is provided to all Fellows at all sites; 3) Expertise available at any given MIRECC Fellowship site can be shared with other sites; 4) Continued feedback and input from all sites capitalizes on the expertise from each site, so excellent training resources are provided to everyone; 5) Through the twice a month, two-way interactive videoconference seminar series, Fellows are given the opportunity for nation-wide networking with peers and faculty in many areas of mental health research.

These interactive components combine to ensure the success of the MIRECC Fellowship Program and effectively demonstrate that the "whole is greater than the sum of its parts." ♦



New Leadership *(Continued from page 1)*

Cross's previous responsibilities included leadership of Primary Care and Seamless Transition for returning veterans. Most significantly for Mental Health, he has been a major proponent of the need for VHA to prioritize the integration of mental health with primary care through the broad implementation of collaborative care. Madhulika Agarwal, MD, MPH, remains as Chief Patient Care Services Officer. Under her leadership, Mental Health continues in its prominent place at the table with other patient care programs. Everyday, she speaks and acts for the integration of mental health and primary care, and for addressing mental health with the same urgency as other goals.

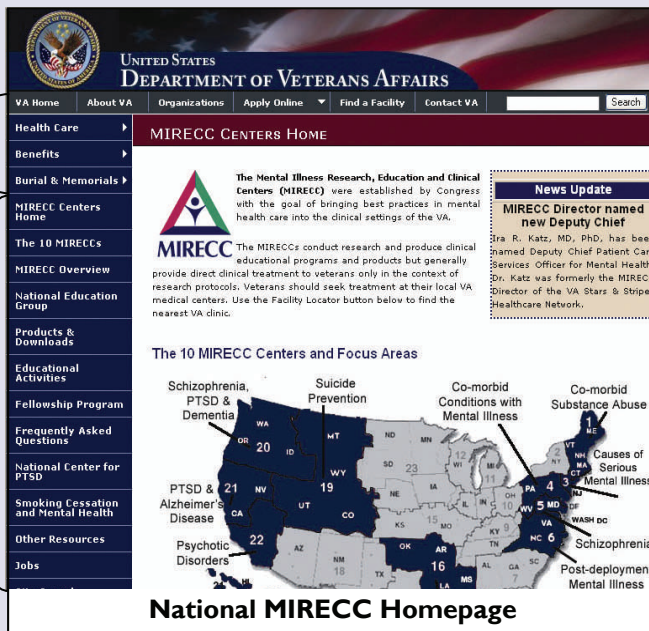
Specifically for the MIRECCs, the new VHA leadership continues insightful policies that place a high priority on mental health care. The new leadership also champions the need for ongoing translational and mental health services research as a vehicle for helping the VA maintain its strengths. ♦

Our Website Has a New Look

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has undergone a transformation of its web presence, working towards establishing a common look and feel, or "branding," for all VA affiliated websites. A revised 6102 VA directive, which establishes guidelines and rules for all VA websites, was fully implemented on September 30, 2006. This new VA standard demands that all VA Internet websites reflect evolving best practices for customer service, technology, and security. Many of the mandates established in 6102 do not translate into visible changes to websites but ensure that our web content is accessible to the widest range of users and reflects the mission of the VA. The MIRECCs have implemented the 6102 mandates to ensure that the National MIRECC website and each individual MIRECC website is in compliance with the new standards.

VA LINKS

MIRECC LINKS



National MIRECC Homepage

EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

VISN 1 April 2007 Ongoing 2006/2007	Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and its Clinical Applications Bedford VA Medical Center, MA Educational Website for Veterans & VA Staff www.veteranrecovery.med.va.gov Contact: Lisa.Mueller@med.va.gov
VISN 3 December-June 2006/2007	Recovery in Action Facility-based training Multiple sessions Suicide Assessment, Management and Prevention Facility-based training Multiple sessions Contact: Bruce.Levine@va.gov
VISN 4 February 23, 2007 April 20, 2007	VA Grand Rounds—Joint MIRECC-Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic Grand Rounds Western Psychiatric Institute and Facility, Auditorium Pittsburgh, PA Contact: sara.salmon-cox@va.gov Fourth Annual PADRECC/MIRECC Symposium on Neurodegenerative Diseases: The Interface of Psychiatry and Neurology Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Contact: Katy.Ruckdeschel@med.va.gov
VISN 16 Ongoing 2006/2007	Monthly Web-based Conference Series Third Thursdays at noon, CT Contact: Michael.Kauth@med.va.gov
VISN 19 February 7-9 2007	Evidence-based Practices for Suicidal Persons Denver, CO in collaboration with VISNs 3 & 4 Contact: Jan.Kemp@va.gov
VISN 20 Ongoing 2006/2007 Ongoing 2006/2007	"MIRECC Presents," a bi-weekly V-Tel Conference on a range of mental health topics 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month All-City Palliative Care Conference End of life issues 1st Friday of each month Contact: Shannon.squire@med.va.gov
VISN 21 May 21, 2007	Updates on Dementia The Frances C. Arrillaga Alumni Center Stanford University, CA Contact: Chris.Jones@va.gov
VISN 22 Ongoing 2006/2007	Recovery & Rehabilitation Online lectures on Recovery and the NFC Report/VA Action Agenda www.desertpacific.mirecc.va.gov Contact: Louise.Mahoney@va.gov

On the newly designed pages, MIRECC specific links are found below the VA standard top three links in the left menu of each page. You may get to each individual MIRECC web site by selecting "The 10 MIRECCs" menu item and then selecting a specific MIRECC.

Visit us at www.mirecc.va.gov.

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NATIONWIDE MIRECCs

VISN 1

Bruce Rounsaville, MD, Director
(203) 932-5711 x7401

West Haven, Connecticut

<http://www.veteranrecovery.med.va.gov/>

**Improve care for veterans with mental illness
and substance dependence**

VISN 3

Larry Siever, MD, Director
(718) 584-9000 x3704

Bronx, New York

<http://www.visn3.mirecc.va.gov/>

**Investigate causes and treatments of serious
mental illness to enhance recovery of veterans**

VISN 4

David Oslin, MD, Acting Director
(215) 349-8226

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<http://www.va.gov/visn4mirecc>

**Advance care for veterans with concurrent
physical, mental and/or substance use disorder**

VISN 5

Alan S. Bellack, PhD, ABPP, Director
(410) 605-7451

Baltimore, Maryland

<http://www.va.gov/visn5mirecc>

**Improve care for veterans with schizophrenia
and for their families**

VISN 6

Harold Kudler, MD, Acting Director
(919) 286-6933

Durham, North Carolina

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

**Create a translational medicine center for the
clinical assessment and treatment of
post-deployment mental illness**

VISN 16

Greer Sullivan, MD, MSPH, Director
(501) 257-1971

North Little Rock, Arkansas

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

**Close the gap between mental health research and
clinical practice**

VISN 19

Lawrence E. Adler, MD, Director
(303) 303-8020 x2832

Denver, Colorado

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/visn19.asp>

**Improve care for suicidal veterans through
integration of research, education and clinical
practice**

VISN 20

Murray A. Raskind, MD, Director
(206) 768-5375

Seattle, Washington

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/visn20.asp>

**Investigate the genetics, neurobiology and
treatment of schizophrenia, PTSD and dementia**

VISN 21

Jerome Yesavage, MD, Director
(650) 852-3287

Palo Alto, California

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/visn21.asp>

**MIRECC Fellowship Hub Site
Individualize treatments for veterans with PTSD or
with Alzheimer's Disease**

VISN 22

Stephen R. Marder, MD, Director
(310) 268-3647

Los Angeles, California

<http://desertpacific.mirecc.va.gov>

**Improve functional outcomes of veterans with
psychotic disorders**

VISN 2 Center for Integrated Healthcare (CIH)

Steven Batki, MD, Director
(315) 425-6749

Syracuse, New York

**Dedicated to improving the quality of health care
for veterans by integrating behavioral health ser-
vices into the primary care setting**

**National MIRECC
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www.mirecc.va.gov



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