Meet the SC MIRECC Fellows

The SC MIRECC Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment trains postdoctoral health professionals and scientists for leadership roles in research, education, and clinical services. This month, we welcome our new and returning fellows to the program.

Anthony Ecker, PhD is a first-year fellow in Houston. He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Louisiana State University and completed predoctoral internship at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, Connecticut. His research has focused on the translational study of co-occurring

See FELLOWS on page 2

SC MIRECC CBOC Mental Health Rounds Offers CEU to VA Providers Nationwide

SC MIRECC has been a leader in educating VA providers on priorities in mental health care since 1998. Education is one of our four core tenets (along with Research, Research Training, and Improving Clinical Care). This month marks the five-year anniversary of the CBOC MH Rounds series. We created this webinar series to support mental health education for providers in VA community-

See CBOC MH ROUNDS on page 6
FELLOWS (continued from page 1)

mental health and substance use disorders. This work includes the inter-related aims of identifying treatment-malleable mechanisms that contribute to comorbidity, development and implementation of transdiagnostic and integrated treatments for co-occurring disorders, and efforts to improve mental health services for individuals with co-occurring disorders. His mentoring team includes Dr. Natalie Hundt, Dr. Jan Lindsay, and Dr. Michael Cucciare.

Joanna Lamkin, PhD is a first-year fellow in Houston. She received a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Georgia and completed a clinical internship at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Thus far, her research has centered on the connections between interpersonal factors and functioning in romantic relationships and social networks. As a student, she received training and mentorship in statistical techniques for this research, including multilevel modeling and social network analysis. As a fellow, she plans to further study how these interpersonal/social factors impact treatment engagement and outcome. Dr. Lamkin is passionate about the movement toward more dimensional conceptualizations of personality (and psychopathology in general), as well as improving care for underserved populations. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, reading, and spending time with family.

Chelsea Ratcliff, PhD is a second-year fellow in Houston. She received a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Houston and completed a clinical internship at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston. Dr. Ratcliff was awarded National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute predoctoral funding to study the effect of brief guided mindfulness-meditation on anxiety, pain, and brain activity during stereotactic breast biopsy at the
University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. As a fellow, she is studying practical ways to integrate mental health care in medical settings, with mentorship from Dr. Jeffrey Cully. She is currently conducting a pilot study of a brief, pre-surgical behavioral intervention for individuals at risk for compromised postoperative recovery.

John Ray, PhD is a third-year fellow in Little Rock. He received a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of South Florida and completed a clinical internship in the VA St. Louis Health Care System Psychology Training Program. His research interests center on co-occurring PTSD and substance use disorders, including the cognitive, affective and biological mechanisms that underlie these disorders, as well as the use of technology and peer support strategies to improve access to care. Dr. Ray is active in the mental health clinic at the Eugene J. Towbin Healthcare Center in North Little Rock, providing evidence-based therapy to Veterans with PTSD and co-occurring disorders. Outside of this important work, John enjoys time with his wonderful family (Carol, Janie and Jackson), heavy metal music, baseball, grilling, craft beer, and running, pretty much in that order.

Elyse R. Thakur, PhD is a second-year fellow in Houston. She received a PhD in Clinical Psychology, with a specialization in health psychology, from Wayne State University in Detroit. She completed a pre-doctoral internship at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. In graduate school, Dr. Thakur’s research focused on developing efficient and effective interventions for patients with functional bowel disorders and pain-related problems. As a first-year fellow, Dr. Thakur received a pilot grant from the South Central MIRECC for her study, "A Referral Toolkit for Behavioral Management of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)." The goal of this project is to develop a referral toolkit that will provide a model for the successful adoption and implementation of behavioral treatment for IBS in VHA specialty care gastrointestinal (GI) settings. This project is ongoing, and Dr. Thakur will complete it in September 2017. Moving forward, she plans to submit a career development award application, which will focus on the delivery of empirically supported treatments for IBS in specialty care GI settings. Her mentoring team includes Drs. Melinda Stanley, Hashem El-Serag, Lilian Dindo, and Mark Kunik.

Eva Woodward, PhD is a second-year fellow in Little Rock. Trained as a clinical health psychologist, her core professional value is to reduce physical and mental health disparities. She learned much from her diverse advisors, peers, and patients in her training at Oklahoma State University (BS), Suffolk University in Boston (PhD), and Brown University medical school (residency). Dr. Woodward has clinical and research experience in sexual minority (LGBQ) health research, HIV, and primary care mental health integration. In Little Rock, she has developed a foundation in implementation science and is excited about her research program to reduce health disparities through implementation science, especially in settings that serve socially marginalized individuals.
SC MIRECC Accepting Off-Cycle SC MIRECC Clinical Educator Grants

SC MIRECC is now accepting off-cycle applications for the fiscal year 2017 SC MIRECC Clinical Educator Grants program. **Applications are due December 16, 2016 and projects will be selected in early January 2017.** Project funds are only available for one fiscal year; off-cycle grants require that applicants work faster than usual to get project funds spent or obligated before the end of the fiscal year (early September).

These grants (up to $10,000 for multi-site projects) are available to VISN 16 and VISN 17 clinicians to develop innovative clinical education tools that benefit the mental healthcare of rural and other underserved Veterans. We are especially interested in funding projects that involve collaborations between medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics. View our free inventory at [http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/clinicalEducationProducts.asp](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/clinicalEducationProducts.asp) for examples of past products. Contact Dr. Geri Adler at Geri.Adler@va.gov with questions about the Clinical Educator Grants program or to submit your application. Download the application at [www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/education.asp](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/education.asp).

SC MIRECC Updates Request for Applications (RFA) for Pilot Study Program

The request for applications (RFA) for the SC MIRECC pilot study program has been updated for fiscal year 2017. The pilot study program stimulates research that can be used to develop clinical policy or programs that improve access, quality and outcomes of mental health and substance abuse treatment services for rural and underserved Veterans. The program is intended to increase both the quantity and quality of federally funded research that will help better understand the experiences of rural/underserved Veterans and to support the development and dissemination of evidence-based practices that can make a real difference in their lives.

Major changes to the RFA include:

- The maximum duration of projects has been shortened to 1 year, although it is possible to request a waiver to submit a proposal for a longer period.

- Consistent with the shorter duration, the maximum budget request has been lowered to $55,000; again, it is possible to request a waiver to submit a proposal with a larger budget.

- The maximum length of the proposal narrative has been expanded from 4 pages to 5 pages to give applicants more room to provide methodologic detail.

- Fellows who are applying must now include a plan describing how the project will be completed if the fellowship ends before project-completion and must identify a doctoral-level faculty co-investigator who will assume responsibility for completing the project, if necessary. An additional 1/2 page may be added to the usual maximum of 5 pages to allow Fellows to describe the plan.
• Medical students, interns and residents are not eligible to apply for pilot awards unless they request and receive a waiver prior to submission.

• Contact information has been brought up-to-date.

To download the updated RFA, visit http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/research.asp. Applications for the SC MIRECC Pilot Study Research Program are accepted four times a year, January 1, April 1, July 1, October 1, or the following Monday after a weekend. The next application deadline is January 3, 2017.

---

**Announcements**

**Dr. Jeffrey Pyne Joins New Initiative to Implement Genomic Testing to Improve Depression Care for Veterans**

Join us in congratulating Dr. Jeffrey Pyne for his selection to join the VHA Office of Research and Development (ORD), Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D), and the Genomic Medicine Implementation program PRIME Care (PRecision medicine In MEntal health Care). The study will be led by David Oslin, MD and a multidisciplinary team of investigators throughout VHA. Dr. Pyne will be an investigator in the Value Assessment Core. PRIME Care will focus on the effectiveness of pharmacogenomics, how genes personally affect a person’s response to treatment and may help shorten time to optimal treatment by predicting how well an individual will tolerate or respond to an antidepressant. Dr. Pyne is the SC MIRECC Associate Director for Research and an investigator with the VA HSR&D Center for Mental Health and Outcomes Research and the UAMS Division of Health Services Research.

**Dr. Jan Lindsay Receives Two VA Office of Rural Health Grants**

We congratulate Dr. Jan Lindsay for receiving two VA Office of Rural Health grants. The first grant, “Serving Rural Veterans Where They Live: Implementing VA Video to Home for Mental Health Treatment,” will target rural Veterans facing barriers to accessing timely and appropriate mental health care. This project will train VA providers working in rural clinics to provide a wider range of mental health treatment to Veterans in their home using VA Video. The project will use facilitation implementation strategies to support the adoption of VA Video to Home into sustained practice by providers. Dr. Lindsay is the Lead PI for this study.

The second grant, “Military Sexual Trauma Web-Based Therapy,” will use STAIR ( Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation), an engaging, positive, nonstigmatizing skills program, to assist rural women Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma. The program will meet the unique needs of rural women Veterans by successfully addressing problems of social isolation, low perceived social support, and PTSD and depression symptoms. The program will be delivered via telemental health to the Veteran’s home. The program is also supported by webSTAIR, a web-based version of the program that the mental health provider and the Veteran work on together using a shared screen. Dr. Lindsay is the Houston Site PI for this multisite study.
2016 VHA Dementia Steering Committee Recommendations Now Available

The VHA Dementia Steering Committee (DSC) Recommendations for Dementia Care in the VHA Health Care System 2016 have been posted for dissemination.

- The 2016 DSC Recommendations are available on the VHA Office of Geriatrics & Extended Care Internet website at http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/GEC_Data_Reports.asp.
- The 2016 DSC Recommendations are also posted on the VHA Dementia SharePoint site (Note: This is an internal web site that is not available to the public).

The DSC is an interdisciplinary, interoffice committee initially convened in 2006 by VHA Office of Patient Care Services and logistically supported by Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care Services. The DSC is charged with synthesizing available best practice information and making recommendations to VHA leadership on key elements of dementia care across the VHA health care system. The DSC’s overall goal is to enhance dementia care in VHA and strengthen the provision of comprehensive, coordinated care of Veterans with dementia.

**The DSC recommendations themselves are not VHA policy or mandates.** The DSC presents its recommendations for VHA Central Office, Network, and VA medical facility staff to consider for system-wide or local implementation. Further action may include development of written VHA policies at the national or local level.

For more information, contact Dr. Susan G. Cooley, Chief, Dementia Initiatives, Geriatrics and Extended Care Services, at (561) 441-6165 or at Susan.Cooley@va.gov.

---

**CBOC MH ROUNDS (continued from page 1)**

Based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) and other areas of the country where access to training is limited. Under the direction of Dr. Geri Adler, we have trained more than 5500 unique providers through this series since November 2011.

The CBOC MH Rounds is presented via Microsoft Lync communications software. Providers can set aside one hour a month to participate in the trainings without leaving their offices. Each presentation is accredited for 1 hour of continuing education credit through the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (for physicians and non-physicians), the American Psychological Association, the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the Association of Social Work Boards, the New York State Education Department Social Work Board, the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, and the National Board for Certified Counselors. Registration and evaluation is completed through the VA Talent Management System (TMS). Once all requirements for the webinar are met, learners can print their accredited certificate through TMS.

Though any VA provider is welcome to participate in this series, we target CBOC providers because they have fewer opportunities to leave their clinics for education and fewer options for interacting with colleagues in other locations. Microsoft
Lync has features that allow learners to communicate with each other and the presenters, including a chat box and direct messaging.

We offer two opportunities to attend each monthly presentation. Mark your calendars to join us at 8:00 am CT on second Wednesdays OR 11:00 am CT on second Thursdays. In the coming months we will cover a broad spectrum of topics of interest to providers across the country, including ethics and service animals, PTSD and insomnia, posttraumatic growth, and mindfulness. We also offer non-accredited copies of our past presentations. Email Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov for more information about the series, past presentations, troubleshooting, to join our mailing list, or to request materials. You can also join the Rural MIRECC group on Pulse for program updates at https://www.vapulse.net/groups/rural-mirecc or visit http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/education.asp. We hope you will join us!

Message from Dr. Geri Adler, the CBOC MH Rounds Program Director

It has been five years since we first began offering the SC MIRECC CBOC Mental Health Rounds. Since then we have grown from VISN 16 to a national audience. In an effort to appeal to the diverse interests of our audience, we have offered a mix of topics that have included ethics, polypharmacy, suicide and safety planning, dementia, eating disorders, and nightmares.

The series is a success due to the work of our planning committee. The committee meets monthly and is composed of mental health providers from a variety of disciplines from across the country. They oversee the planning process by identifying content, selecting topics, recommending speakers, establishing objectives and ensuring that each session adheres to accreditation board criteria.

I’d like to thank everyone on the planning committee, including:

- Jody Baudoin, MSW, LCSW
- Beth Jeffries, PhD
- Deidra Johnson-Walker, MSN, RN
- Michael Kauth, PhD
- Joseph Kennedy, MD
- Mark Kunik, MD, MPH
- Joel Wendell, PhD

Of course, the rounds could not be made possible without the support of the VA Employee Education System (EES) program managers and assistants who have worked with us since the program started. The assistance of Tim Walsh and Kimber Polette, our current program manager and our education tech, respectively, has been invaluable. Ashley McDaniel, who has been with the series since the start, provides exemplary technical support, has amazing creativity and displayed strong leadership. Finally, I’d like to thank our wonderful presenters who have been generous with their time - developing and delivering content to a growing audience.
CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Service Animals and Ethics

VA mental health providers are invited to attend the next CBOC Mental Health Rounds session titled "Service Animals and Ethics" on Wednesday, November 9 at 8:00-9:00 am CT or Thursday, November 10 at 11:00-12:00 pm CT. This Microsoft Lync session will be presented by Richard Adams, MBA, LCSW and Holly Schaffter Chari, J.D. At the conclusion of this educational program, learners will be able to:

1. Define the concept of "service animal"
2. Differentiate between a service animal and a comfort animal
3. Discuss VA guidelines regarding service dogs and other animals
4. Distinguish between animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted therapy

Call 1-800-767-1750 and use access code 37009# to participate. Email Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov or call (501) 257-1223 for registration and continuing education credit information.

Upcoming CBOC Mental Health Rounds
Second Wednesdays
(8:00-9:00 am CT)
and
Thursdays
(11:00-12:00 am CT)
Monthly
(800) 767-1750;
37009#

December 14 & 15, 2016
PTSD and Insomnia

January 11 & 12, 2017
Posttraumatic Growth

February 8 & 9, 2017
Mindfulness

Learn more about SC MIRECC by visiting www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16