Director's Update: Welcome to Dr. Shaw

I am pleased to announce that R. Keith Shaw, PhD, has assumed the role of Associate Director of the MIRECC Clinical Core. Keith also serves as the Director of Psychology Training at the Durham VA. During this past year, he also has been Durham's acting Senior Psychologist. From the time of its inception in 2008 until late 2014, Keith served as a member of the executive committee of the VA Psychology Training Council (VAPTC, the national training council that represents all VA psychology training programs), including a 3-year leadership sequence as the Chair. During his ten years (2003-2013) at VA Boston Healthcare System, he had primary roles as Internship Director of the Boston Consortium in Clinical Psychology and Assistant Chief of Psychology. Dr. Shaw also served as the first director of VA Boston's Center for Returning Veterans (OEF/OIF), from its creation in 2005 until 2008. His clinical work and outreach activities within VA have been primarily focused upon returning combat veterans. Prior to 2003, he worked for 19 years in Missouri's public mental health system, as the clinical director of a psychiatric hospital and in various other hospital, interagency, and regional mental health leadership roles. His interests include barriers to care in mental health for returning combat veterans, community psychology, interventions with families, and systems of care in mental health services. We are excited that Dr. Shaw brings to the MIRECC's Clinical Core extensive experience as a leader, training director, and clinician.

John A. Fairbank, Ph.D. Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC

Focus on the VISN Community Outreach

Dr. Mira Brancu (MIRECC PDMH Study Managing Director) gave an invited presentation about the MIRECC's Post-Deployment Mental Health (PDMH) Study & Repository to the North Carolina National Guard Integrated Behavioral Health System at their monthly call in November. This opportunity for outreach to NC National Guard mental health providers and to increase awareness of the research the VA is doing on post-deployment mental health arose from Dr. Brancu's outreach presentation last April at the North Carolina Women Veterans Summit and Expo, North Carolina National Guard Headquarters, Raleigh, NC.

Recently Approved Grants

Chris Marx (PI) Neurosteroid Intervention in Gulf War Veterans Illnesses (GWVI). VA Merit Review Award

Gerald Grant, Michael Hauser & Chris Marx (Co-PIs) Genetic, Epigenetic, and Metabolomic Biomarker Predictors of PTSD and Resilience following TBI. Department of Defense (ancillary project to INTRuST)
Focus on the VISN
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National Service

Dr. Mira Brancu (MIRECC PDMH Study Managing Director) has been elected Chair of the American Psychological Association (APA) Committee on Professional Practice and Standards (COPPS). COPPS was developed by the Board of Professional Affairs (BPA) to develop and review professional practice guidelines for psychologists. Dr. Brancu has served on this committee for the previous 2 years. During that time she has been part of the team developing new guidelines for community psychologists working with military service members, veterans, and families. The team has been actively reaching out to stakeholders and leaders within VA, DoD, and the community to review and provide input on these guidelines. Still a work in progress, this is an opportunity for VA stakeholders to be involved in helping community providers understand the mental health service needs of veterans. Dr. Brancu’s other projects include updating the current record keeping guidelines and developing process improvement initiatives to facilitate dissemination.

Invited Lectures

Dr. Robin A. Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented Windows to the Brain: Neuropsychiatry of Brain Injury and Common Comorbidities as part of the VA HSR&D Cyberseminars series December 3, 2014. Dr. Hurley presented Windows to the Brain: Neuropsychiatry of War-Related TBI and its Co-morbidities as part of the Wake Forest School of Medicine Department of Neurology Grand Rounds on December 9, 2014 and Working with the VA for Research: An Update for 2014 at the Wake Forest School of Medicine Faculty Representative Council meeting on December 18, 2014, Winston-Salem, NC.

Dr. Christine Marx (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research) presented “Biomarkers and the Neurobiology of PTSD: Implications for PTSD Risk and Individualized Therapeutics” as part of Grand Rounds at University of Texas Health Science Center on May 6, 2014 in San Antonio, TX.

Updates - MIRECC Fellowship Program
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Transitions

We bid a fond farewell to Dr. Ruth Yoash-Gantz, who has done a stellar job as Director of our Salisbury site’s Psychology Fellowship program since its inception. Ruth is leaving VA employment in January, but will continue to mentor our Fellows and be an active research collaborator. Dr. Kristin Humphrey will be the new Director.

Welcome to our new Fellow

Amie Schry earned her BA in psychology at Mercer University, and her PhD in clinical psychology at Virginia Tech. Amie completed her pre-doctoral internship at the Durham VAMC and is now the new MIRECC Fellow at that site. Her research interests focus on the relationship between anxiety and health risk. In particular, her past research has focused on the relationships between social anxiety and both sexual victimization and alcohol-related variables in college students. Amie hopes to expand her research during her fellowship to examine sexual revictimization in Veterans, including how anxiety may play a role in revictimization. She also plans to examine the relationship between PTSD and health risk behaviors such as tobacco use, alcohol use, and drug use. In her spare time, Amie enjoys reading, music, and spending time with her partner and dog.

Updates - Engaging Chaplains in MH Care

This project is funded by Central Office and housed within our MIRECC. Dr. Keith Meador directs the initiative, and Dr. Jason Nieuwsma serves as associate director.

Mental Health and Chaplaincy Learning Collaborative

The goal of this Joint-Incentive Fund project is to develop and implement trainings that will address the knowledge gap of integration of chaplains with mental health care services in the VA and DOD. All 14 learning collaborative teams (chaplain, mental health provider, and systems redesign coach) attended the third session in St. Petersburg, FL, in October, 2014. Teams (7 VA, 7 DoD) are from all over the country and from all branches of the military.

Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS)

The second Face-to-Face training session for this year-long mental health certification training program was held in Tampa, FL, in December, 2014. This curriculum provides Chaplains the opportunity to learn about best practices identified within and across the VA and DOD. At present, 37 VA and DOD Chaplains are working towards certification as Mental Health Chaplains.

Community Outreach

Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell W. Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT): Building evidence-based skills to enhance professional chaplaincy. Invited full-day workshop presented at the South Carolina Society of Chaplains Annual Meeting, October 2014, Columbia, SC.

Updates - MIRECC Fellowship Program

Our Richmond site’s Psychology Fellowship program, jointly directed by Drs. Scott McDonald and Treven Pickett, recently received contingent APA/CoA accreditation through 2019!
Meeting Presentations

Marx C. Randomized Controlled Proof-of-Concept Trial of Pregnenolone in Schizophrenia.

American Society for Bioethics and Humanities

ASBH 16th Annual Meeting

October 16-19, 2014
Hilton San Diego Bayfront Hotel • San Diego, CA

Meador KG, Nieuwsma JA. Utilizing an Interprofessional Clergy-Mental Health Partnership Approach to Moral Injury.

IST'S

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

30th Annual Meeting

November 6-8, 2014 • InterContinental Miami, Miami, Florida, USA


Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies

48th Annual Convention | Nov. 20-23, 2014


American College of Neuropsychopharmacology

ACNP

53rd Annual Meeting - Phoenix, Arizona - December 7-11, 2014

Marx C. Neurosteroids and Sex Differences: Relevance to Biomarkers and Therapeutics.

Visit our web site for more resources

Journal Articles


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Free Web Courses for Providers

Treating the Invisible Wounds of War www.ahecconnect.com/citizensoldier

Click on New Users to register. You will then see the available web 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 Civilian Workforce
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

These courses were developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC). They are designed to help primary care physicians, case workers, mental health providers - who may see a veteran or family member on an unrelated issue - develop a better understanding of the culture in which veterans and their families live and work, and provide best practices for identifying, assessing and treating mental health problems that result from the trauma of war.

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Educational Resources from the TBI Model Systems Carolinas Site

Heads Up - An Ounce of Prevention
Heads Up - Fatigue
Heads Up - Irritability
Heads Up - Plans for the Future
Heads Up - Wake Up Call (Sleep Disturbances after TBI)

Visit our web site for more resources

Online Training Resources for Veterans: http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/

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 such as relationship and parenting problems, financial hardship, and re-adjustment issues.

Moving Forward - Overcoming Life’s Challenges
An educational and life coaching program that teaches Problem Solving skills to help you better handle life’s challenges

Parenting for Service Members & Veterans
This course provides parents with tools that strengthen parenting skills and helps them reconnect with their children.

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.