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**Focus on the VISN**

**Study featured by MH Services in a Cabinet Report!**

When it first launched its mission to identify, promote and study best practices in deployment mental health, the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 6 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC) team decided to ask Veterans what they wanted from VA rather than tell them what the experts thought they needed. The April 2015 edition of the Journal of Traumatic Stress will include a scientific report on a VISN 6 MIRECC survey of Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan who were users or non-users of mental health services within VA or community systems and who also reported significant symptoms of PTSD. The goal was to learn what these Veterans most wanted from VA and to understand any concerns that might keep them from seeking care.

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**MIRECC Activities Support VHA Blueprint for Excellence**

**Strategy 2:** Deliver high quality, Veteran-centered care that compares favorably to the best of private sector in measured outcomes, value, access and patient experience.

- **Coaching into Care**
  - Providing education and support to empower family members/friends of Veterans to get them into care.

- **Online Parenting Course**
  - Serving Veterans through web-based mental health services.

- **HOME Project**
  - Serving at-risk Veterans at home and in rural areas.

- **Developing Case Finders**
  - Identify at-risk Veterans who may not present through other VA outreach efforts and care delivery.

- **Mobile Technologies**
  - Serving homeless, rural & returning Veterans to improve their mental health and reduce health risks.

- **National MH & Chaplaincy Program**
  - Serving Veterans through partnership between chaplains and mental health providers.

- **Veteran Health & Needs Assessment**
  - Serving OEF/OIF/OND Veterans by identifying treatment preferences and barriers to care.

- **Practice Based Implementation**
  - Serving Veterans by identifying facilitators to mental health practice changes.

- **MH Summits - VISN 6 & National**
  - Serving Veterans through partnerships with community agencies and providers in support of VISN 6 MH Summits and leading national evaluations of MH Summits to provide guidance for national policy.

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**Recently Approved Grants**

- **Katherine Taber (PI) Structural & Functional Neurobiology of Veterans Exposed to Primary Blast Forces. VA/DOD Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium**

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**Director’s Update: Welcome to new Deputy Director**

The VISN 6 MIRECC’s national search for a Deputy Director has concluded successfully. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Mira Brancu accepted the Deputy Director position, officially transitioning on March 22. Mira is working with me and others within the MIRECC to implement a phased and thoughtful transition from her previous responsibilities as Managing Director of the OEF/OIF/OND Post-Deployment Mental Health Study, Data Warehouse and Biorepository. Please join me in congratulating and thanking Mira for taking on this new role in service to the mission of the VISN 6 MIRECC to improve the post-deployment mental health of our Nation’s Veterans.

**John A. Fairbank, Ph.D. Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC**
Focus on the VISN
Study featured by MHS in a Cabinet Report! continued from page 1

Veterans reported concerns about the kind of PTSD treatment they might receive at VA and about the stigma associated with reporting a mental health problem, but an important study finding was that the primary reason why Veterans with significant symptoms of PTSD chose not to seek mental health care was their concern about the privacy of their medical record.

When asked what they most wanted from VA, their top choice (endorsed by 91.0% of participants) was for assistance with their VA benefits. This finding supports plans for the new MyVA program designed to ensure that every Veteran can engage all aspects of VA service (healthcare, benefits and cemetery services) at any VA point of contact. Those Veterans who were already engaged in mental health care reported a strong desire for family services and for help with particular PTSD symptoms. Severity of PTSD symptoms drove help-seeking and many participants communicated preferences for care that would address physical problems as well. This supports VA’s efforts to address mental health issues in Primary Care settings where Veterans can be engaged on both levels without having to make a special “Mental Health” appointment (thus side-stepping any associated stigma).

Based on these findings, the authors suggest that VA undertake a novel outreach/education program addressing existing privacy protections, benefits questions, treatment options and family services in order to best engage Veterans with PTSD symptoms who served in Iraq or Afghanistan.


VA Awards & Recognition

Two members of our MIRECC, Dr. Jennifer Runnals (left) and Mary Pender (right), received I CARE awards from the Durham VA!

Invited Lectures

Dr. Mira Brancu (MIRECC Deputy Director) and Juanita Hill presented Developing Lifelong Resilience - Personal, Professional and Team-Level Strategies as part of the VA/DOD/USPHS Social Work Training online series April 8, 2015.

Dr. John Curry (MIRECC Family Studies) and Alyssa Elliot presented Family Issues and Veteran Reintegration as part of the Center for Deployment Psychology webinar series April 9, 2015.

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Focus on the VISN
Leadership Activities

Two of our faculty have accepted invitations to serve on their VA’s R&D committee. Dr. John Fairbank (MIRECC Director) is joining the Durham R&D committee and Dr. Scott McDonald (MIRECC Fellowship Director, Richmond) is joining the Richmond R&D committee.

Dr. McDonald also now serves on the VA/DoD Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) for the Management of Concussion-Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Work Group and the APA Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) Science Committee.

Dr. Rajendra Morey (MIRECC Neuroimaging) has been appointed to lead the Neuroimaging Workgroup within the Psychiatric Genetics Consortium for PTSD. This Consortium has brought together over 35,000 samples from across the world to conduct a PTSD genome-wide association study (GWAS). Within this larger effort, Dr. Morey has organized the neuroimaging-genetics group. This now includes 12 sites with over 4,500 datasets, the largest neuroimaging-genetics effort in PTSD to date.

MIRECC Faculty Honored

Dr. Jean Beckham (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research) has been awarded Duke University School of Medicine’s Research Mentoring Award. She was nominated by a group of past and current mentees across VA and academic institutions, all of whom wrote glowing letters of nomination. She is an amazing mentor, and it’s wonderful that her contributions to future generations of researchers are being acknowledged!

Meeting Presentations

Access To Culturally Competent Health Services: Serving Military Veterans From A Holistic Perspective

UNC - Charlotte, February 24, 2015, Charlotte NC

Shura RD, Williams VG, Rowland JA. Towards an Evidence-Based Protocol for Evaluating ADHD with OIF/OEF/OND Veterans.

American Neuropsychiatric Association
2015 Annual Meeting Theme: NEUropsychiatRY UPDATE

March 25 - 28, 2015, Orlando FL

Jadadian A, Hurley RA, Taber KH. Adults with ADHD: A Review of Recent Findings.

Reihl KM, Hurley RA, Taber KH. The Neuroanatomy of Implicit and Explicit Bias: Implications for Clinicians.


Shura R, Yoash-Gantz R, Taber KH, Stefanick A. A Complex Case of a Veteran Post Frontal Meningioma Resection: Neurological and Neuropsychological Interpretations.
Focus on the VISN

MIRECC Activities & VHA Blueprint for Excellence

continued from page 1

Strategy 7: Lead the nation in research and treatment of military service related conditions

★ Developing VA's Next Generation of MH Leaders
We have trained 27 MIRECC postdoctoral Fellows - 75% obtained VA positions with 20% moving into regional or national leadership roles

★ Pre-clinical Research Studies
Developing novel pharmacotherapies for psychiatric disorders & TBI

★ Clinical Research Studies
Developing novel neurosteroid interventions & other medications for treatment of PTSD, TBI, Pain & other disorders

★ Post Deployment Mental Health (PDMH) Study
Providing MH assessments to research participants and connecting Veterans to care via a research conduit (over 3,200 enrolled)

★ VIO-SCAN for Violence Risk
Improving violence screening

★ Practice-Based Implementation Network (PBIN)
Improving implementation of evidence-based psychotherapy nationally

★ "Windows to the Brain: Neuropsychiatry of TBI"
Leading national, regional and local trainings

★ National Integrated Smoking Cessation Implementation
Projects for Veterans with PTSD & homeless Veteran smokers using Learning Collaborative models

★ Biorepository Studies
Developing a large repository for innovative biomarkers research

★ Virtual Mild TBI Patient
Developing a virtual standardized mild TBI patient to improve training in clinical evaluation

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Journal Articles


continued in next column

CBOC Mental Health Rounds

Each CBOC MH Rounds presentation is now offered twice a month.

Wednesday May 13 from 9-10 am ET
Thursday May 14 from 12-1 pm ET
Beyond Clutter: When Too Much Stuff Becomes a Disorder

Wednesday June 10 from 9-10 am ET
Thursday June 11 from 12-1 pm ET
Opioid Risk Management & MH

Remember to register in TMS for a session to receive credit. Log into your TMS account to join the presentation.

July 8 & 9 Polytrauma
August 12 & 13 Ethics

Contact Ashley McDaniel with any questions: ashley.mcdaniel@va.gov or 501-257-1223
Focus on the VISN
MIRECC Activities & VHA Blueprint for Excellence continued from page 3

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<th>Strategy 8</th>
<th>Support innovation in health services through academic affiliations, information exchange, intergovernmental, public-private, and community based initiatives.</th>
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★ Research Collaborations ★
77%+ research studies involve academic, DoD, clinical, medical center, and other collaborations including:
- Strong, productive collaborations among VISN 6 MIRECC investigators and faculty at affiliate universities.
- Supporting the National Research Action Plan through Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium research.
- Collaborating partner in innovative National PTSD Genetics Consortium.

★ Education Collaborations ★
- CBOC Mental Health Rounds (online) in collaboration with VISN 16 MIRECC.
- Online Parenting Course for Service Members & Veterans in collaboration with DoD and multiple VA partners.
- Mental Health & Chaplaincy multi-site educational collaboration with DoD.
- “Treating the Invisible Wounds of War” trainings with AHEC and CSSP.

★ Practice Improvement Collaborations ★
- Practice-Based Implementation Network collaboration with NC-PTSD.
- HOME Project collaboration with VISN 16, MHS, ORH, and local suicide prevention and MH teams.
- TBI CPG - extensive participation in VHA’s development and ongoing management of the TBI assessment/treatment system of care.

★ Outreach Collaborations ★
- North Carolina Vet-to-Vet with state & Veteran organizations; NC Governor’s Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families.

Visit our web site for more resources http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6.asp

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
Moving Forward is 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 on-line 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.

Journal Articles continued from page 3


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 - Sleep Disturbances after TBI
http://www.carolinashealthcare.org/carolinas-rehab-heads-up-educational-resources

★ Free ★ Web Courses for Providers
Treating the Invisible Wounds of War www.aheconnect.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).