An interview with Dr. Robin Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) has just been posted on VAntage Point, the official blog of the US Department of Veteran Affairs!

Dr. Hurley shares some of her thoughts on the tremendous impact that VA partnerships with US medical schools have had on health care for Veterans and medicine in general.

Dr. Hurley coordinates and oversees training and education programs of VA residents and students at the Salisbury VA Medical Center. She has been strengthening the VA’s affiliation with the Wake Forest School of Medicine in nearby Winston-Salem for some time, commenting “I knew the relationship could be special.”
Focus on the VISN

Research Project Update

Abstinence Reinforcement Therapy (ART) for Homeless Veteran Smokers

Recently, Dr. Beckham (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research) and her study team hosted a Consumer, Family and Expert Provider Advisory Board meeting. The purpose was to support her VA RR&D Merit Review funded study evaluating the efficacy of an innovative smoking cessation treatment program for Veterans experiencing unstable housing. The advisory board members met to review study progress in the first year, brainstorm about study recruitment, and provide feedback to the study team about study procedures.

Consumer, Family, and Expert Panel Advisory Board

The advisory board was led by Dr. Kimberly Green. The board includes homeless Veterans who had participated in similar research projects, a family member of a homeless Veteran, and a social worker from the Durham VA's Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program. Drs. Michael Green and Jonathan Wynn, both clinician-researchers from the Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center's Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) for Enhancing Community Integration for Homeless Veterans, also serve on the advisory board. The board will continue to meet annually over the course of Dr. Beckham’s Merit Review.

Invited Lectures

Dr. Timothy Brearly (MIRECC Fellow, Salisbury site) and Dr. Robert Shura (MIRECC Faculty, Salisbury site) co-presented Malingering and Response Bias as part of the Salisbury VAMC Mental Health Service Line Predoctoral Internship Training Program. 

Dr. Robin A. Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented Neuropsychiatry of TBI and its Co-morbidities to the Richmond Polytrauma Fellowship on November 18, 2015, via V-tel.

Dr. Jason Nieuwsma (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) presented Mental Health - Chaplaincy Integration, a full-day workshop, at the invitation of the U.S. Army Atlantic Region Medical Command, Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, Fort Belvoir, VA.

Dr. Robert Shura (MIRECC Faculty, Salisbury site) presented Traumatic Brain Injury and MMPI-2-RF Interpretation as part of the Salisbury VAMC Mental Health Service Line Predoctoral Internship Training Program. Dr. Shura also presented Assessment of Malingering and Response Bias as part of the Salisbury VAMC Psychology Brown Bag series.

Dr. Courtney Slough (MIRECC Fellow, Salisbury site) made two presentations during the Emerge From the Crowd: How to Become a Standout Residency Candidate workshop held in conjunction with the ACCP conference in October. Dr. Slough was the Roundtable Discussion Leader for Resident Roundtables and a Reviewer for Curriculum Vitae Writing.
Focus on the VISN

Education Project Update  Impulse Control in PTSD Treatment

Dr. John Lynch (MIRECC Faculty, Richmond site) lead the team that was awarded a MIRECC Clinical Education Grant in 2011 to support dissemination of a PTSD treatment model that emphasizes functional and adaptive coping skills. As a result of that proposal, the PTSD Recovery Program treatment manuals (patient and therapist editions) were developed and distributed, including posting on our website. This program has been very well received and has been implemented in several VA facilities since then. Users report positive results, and Dr. Lynch has submitted the program to the new VHA Promising Practices Consortium. An upcoming article in the Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma (November 2015) will discuss outcome statistics demonstrating improvements on an adaptive behavior checklist developed by Dr. Lynch, the PCL-M, the MAPS, and a self-efficacy scale. The 3rd editions of both manuals are now available on our website.  www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6

Blueprint for Excellece Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8

Education Project Update  Self-Management Materials for Sleep Disturbance in Recently Deployed Veterans

Dr. Christy Ulmer (MIRECC Faculty, Durham site) lead the team that was awarded a MIRECC Clinical Education Grant in 2011 to support translation of an evidence-based cognitive-behavioral treatment for insomnia (CBTI) into a self-management workbook format. The team is now in the final stage of refining the workbook and working on developing a national pilot test prior to official release.

Blueprint for Excellece Strategies 2, 7, 8

Education Project Update  Mental Health Innovations Updates from VA’s Specialized Mental Health Centers

The December 2015 edition of this national newsletter is now available on the MIRECC website at: www.mirecc.va.gov/newsletter/current.asp

Employment Assistance for Veterans: The Impact of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Research: Early Intervention for Vocational Problems May Help Prevent Homelessness

Education: Training Materials Being Developed to Support Self-Employment Program for Veterans

Clinical: Implementation Efforts Assist in Getting Veterans with Schizophrenia Back to Work

Blueprint for Excellece Strategy 8

New Leadership Activities

Dr. Treven Pickett (MIRECC Faculty & Richmond Site Fellowship Co-Director) has been appointed to serve on the Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology by the American Psychological Association’s Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest.

Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 8

Dr. Robert Shura (MIRECC Faculty, Salisbury site) has been appointed to serve on the Committee for Research of the American Neuropsychiatric Association.

Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 7, 8

VHA Promising Practices Consortium

The consortium is a new platform established by Dr. David Shulkin, the Under Secretary for Health, where anyone in VHA can share successful operational, clinical, and programmatic practices, and learn from others’ experiences in key strategic areas that align with his priorities.

https://www.vapulse.net/community/under-secretary-for-health/promising-practices-consortium

Dr. Mira Brancu (MIRECC Deputy Director) submitted Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) on November 23, 2015.

Dr. John Lynch (MIRECC Faculty, Richmond site) submitted Measurement practices in group treatment for veterans with combat PTSD on November 30, 2015.
Recently, the VA's Public Health Strategic Health Care Group partnered with our MIRECC to sponsor a new Learning Collaborative. The focus is on Integrated Care Smoking Cessation for Homeless Veterans. Led by Dr. Beckham (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research), the partners contracted with the Duke University Medical Center’s Evidence-Based Practice Implementation Center (Duke EPIC) to help direct this Learning Collaborative. This project aimed to improve the availability of smoking cessation services and outcomes for Veterans who are experiencing unstable housing. Veterans who are homeless smoke at very high rates (up to 80%). They may also experience more negative health sequelae related to smoking. Specialty clinic-based tobacco cessation programs have been shown to be effective in reducing smoking but are infrequently attended, particularly by homeless Veterans. This limits their impact on prevalence, disease, and economic costs of smoking.

Clinical teams from Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Programs (34 providers from 7 VISN 6 VAMCs) were trained and coached on the implementation of a 5-session smoking cessation intervention. The intervention is based on the Integrated Care Smoking Cessation model. It combines evidence-based smoking cessation treatment with existing mental health treatment programs and/or other services. Clinical teams participated in several activities designed to promote implementation. These included launch calls, in-person learning sessions, educational seminars, site visits by the training team, and telephone consultation. Six of the 7 participating teams reported that a workplace culture shift had taken place whereby tobacco cessation is now seen as a priority embraced by program staff. Most teams developed mechanisms for providing smoking cessation, including access to smoking cessation medications, directly to the Veterans enrolled in their program. At one month after the final learning session, 19 providers indicated they were providing the intervention to Veterans enrolled in their program. There were several recommendations for enhancing implementation. These included providing clinicians more training in Motivational Interviewing techniques, supporting use of ongoing standard assessment procedures, and providing incentives to Veterans for successful smoking cessation.

Honors & Awards
Drs. Robert Shura and Holly Miskey (MIRECC Faculty, Salisbury site) received faculty appointment at Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM).
Blueprint for Excellence Strategy 8
Dr. Courtney Slough (MIRECC Fellow, Salisbury site) received Board Certification in Psychiatric Pharmacy (BCPP), November 2015.
Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 2, 8

Transitions
We wish everyone the best of luck in their new positions.

Katie Aiello, previously the Laboratory Manager of the PDMH Study, has moved on to a clinical position outside of the VA. Caitlyn Campbell has assumed the position of PDMH Study and Repository Project Manager.

Dr. Eric Crawford, previously the MIRECC Assistant Director for Clinical, has moved to Sheridan Wyoming VA where he is serving as the Local Recovery Coordinator.

Dr. Jennifer Runnals, previously Post Deployment Mental Health (PDMH) IRB and Repository coordinator, has transitioned to a clinic position at the Durham VA. She will continue to serve as the Research Privacy Officer for the Durham VA.

Dr. Rich Weiner, previously MIRECC Associate Director for Evaluations, now serves as the Interim Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science Department in the Duke University School of Medicine. Dr Weiner is also maintaining a WOC position with Durham VA.
Conferences

November 12-15, 2015 Chicago ABCT

Kelley ML, Harding HG, Lam N, Miller M. Modeling Risk for Partner Violence among OEF/OIF/OND Veteran-Partner Dyads. Poster

Nieuwsma JA, Buck PJ, Jackson GL, Lane ME, Meador KG. Utilization of cognitive behavioral therapeutic principles by chaplains in health care and military settings. Poster


November 5 -7, 2015
Back to Basics: Integrating Clinical and Scientific Knowledge to Advance the Field of Trauma
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA


Hawn SE, Chowdhury N, Kevorkian S, Sheth D, Brown RC, McDonald S, Pickett T, Danielson CK, Thomas S, Amstadter AB. Examination into the moderating effects of impulsivity and risk taking propensity on the relationship between PTSD and Alcohol in OEF/OIF/OND Veterans. Poster

Symposium

J Currier (Chair) & JA Nieuwsma (Discussant) - Moral injury, spirituality, and military trauma: Probing into the clinical implications of treating morally injured patients.


Miskey HM, McDonald SD, Shura RD, Pickett TC, Yoash-Gantz RE, Rowland JA. Performance Validity, but not PTSD, is Associated with Cognitive Performance in Iraq and Afghanistan War Era Veterans. Poster


Symposium

J Currier (Chair) & JA Nieuwsma (Discussant) - Moral injury, spirituality, and military trauma: Probing into the clinical implications of treating morally injured patients.

Publications

Book Chapters

Reports

Invited Articles
Policy Forum - Invited Commentary
This commentary describes the prevalence of mental health problems affecting military service members and veterans in North Carolina and the rest of the nation, with a special emphasis on those who served in the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Approximately 1.9 million of these veterans have become eligible for Veterans Affairs health care since 2002, and an estimated 1.16 million veterans have registered for this care.

Policy Forum - Invited Sidebar

Journal Articles


Resources for Veterans & Families

The VA’s Specialized Mental Health Centers have launched a new website:
http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/self_help.asp

Resources to Empower Veterans Mental Health

Self-help materials can provide valuable education and support for Veterans who may be facing mental health challenges, their friends, and family members. There are a wide variety of self-help materials available and it can sometimes be difficult to select the most useful. VA has assembled a list of reviewer-recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the right option for you. For help in finding these materials, please click the “How to Use” tab.

Online Life Skills Training for Veterans

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.

http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/

AIMS: Anger & Irritability Management Skills

This course offers a wide range of practical skills and tools to manage your anger and develop self-control over your thoughts and actions.

Moving Forward: Stress vs Performance

An educational and life coaching program that teaches Problem Solving skills to help you better handle life’s challenges.

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.

Parenting: Positive Communication

This course provides parents with tools that strengthen parenting skills and helps them reconnect with their children.

NC4VETS Resource Guide

The purpose of this comprehensive resource guide is to assist and educate Veterans in learning about state and federal Veteran benefits. Topic areas include services, employment, healthcare, education, housing and personal services.

http://www.nc4vets.com/blog/resource-guide

This resource guide was produced by the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs in partnership with the Governor’s Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families. http://www.veteransfocus.org
CBOC Mental Health Rounds

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

Driving and Dementia
Wednesday January 13 from 9-10 am ET & Thursday January 14 from 12-1 pm ET

Remember to register in TMS in advance to attend and receive credit. If you require assistance contact EES Program Manager - Tim.Walsh2@va.gov or Education Tech - Jessica.Denno@va.gov

Online Military Culture Training for Community Providers
http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture

It’s important that all who care for Veterans have a basic understanding of military culture. In the interest of the highest quality, most compassionate health care for our Nation’s Veterans, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense launched an online course available at no cost to all Veteran care providers.

Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals

This course stems from research, surveys and hundreds of hours of interviews with Service members and Veterans. It is designed as a comprehensive training in military culture for seasoned practitioners as well as for those less familiar with military populations. The interactive course includes a self-assessment to help providers better understand the biases they may unknowingly have that may be impacting the care they are providing to Veterans and their families. It also includes a variety of vignettes and candid video testimonials to highlight the meaning of military cultural competence.

Treating the Invisible Wounds of War

This workshop series was developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC). The web-based versions of the courses are all free at:

http://www.ahecconnect.com/citizensoldier

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