In recent Updates I’ve discussed several exciting VISN 6 MIRECC initiatives related to our progress moving research into practice.

Another research-into-practice effort planned through our Education Core is to increase access to clinical training and education for rural community-based providers of mental health services to military service members and Veterans. To meet that goal for FY2017, we have partnered with the Duke University Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Partnership Program, headed by Dr. Marvin Swartz.

That program supports the Southern Regional AHEC, which provides clinician education to providers in and around the Fayetteville, North Carolina area that includes Ft. Bragg and nine rural counties. Most attendees are community providers serving military service members, Veterans, and families living in the area. MIRECC faculty will be providing webinars in the following areas:

- **February 22, 2017:** Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I), Dr. Christi Ulmer
- **March 22, 2017:** Neurosteroid Interventions, Dr. Christine Marx
- **April 22, 2017:** Family Needs and Interventions, Dr. John Curry
- **May 24, 2017:** Chronic Pain, Dr. Jennifer Naylor
- **June 28, 2017:** Bipolar Disorder Assessment, Dr. Joshua Tiegreen

More information about how to sign up for these webinars will be disseminated soon.

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

Outreach

“They Saved My Son’s Life”

VHA recently featured a Coaching into Care success story, as told by Julie, the young Marine’s mother.

Julie remembers, “The incredible woman I worked with was Dr. Cindy Swinkels. She explained how vital the family connection was and to keep that communication going so that we could ease our way into helping my son. Without her, we would have been lost and in all probability my son would be dead.” - See the full story at:
www.va.gov/HEALTH/NewsFeatures/2016/September/coaching_into_care_they_saved_my_sons_life.asp

Under Secretary for Health 2nd Annual Shark Tank Competition

The V6 Executive Team and Executive Leadership Council endorsed one of the “Promising Practices” submitted by MIRECC faculty as a “Gold Status Practice” giving it a heavier ranking in the National “Shark Tank” Competition. Dr. Mira Brancu’s Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) Program for Rural Veterans was selected as one of the 80 Semifinalists AND as one of the 20 Finalists!!!!

VISN 6 Announcements

The VISN 6 Retirement Specialty Center (RSC) has moved!

New address:
Department of Veterans Affairs
VISN 6 Retirement Specialty Center
Charlotte CBOC (CLT CBOC 600-VR)
8601 University East Drive
Charlotte, NC 28213

Contact information:
Toll Free Number 1-877-645-6015
Fax: (704) 597-3585 or (704) 597-3572
Email: VISN6RSC@va.gov or VISN6-RetirementSpecialtyCenter@va.gov

National Service

Dr. Raj Morey (MIRECC Faculty & Neuroimaging Lab Director) recently completed four years of service on the VA RR&D Scientific Merit Review Board, Brain Injury: TBI and Stroke Subcommittee.

New Grants

PI: Karen Steinhauser
Cols: Jason Nieuwsma (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) & Heather King, Developing and Validating a Spiritual Assessment Tool for Seriously-Ill Veterans. Funded by: Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research and Development

Invited Lectures

Dr. Robin A. Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented Windows to the Brain: The Neuropsychiatry of TBI as part of the Grand Rounds co-sponsored by Citrus Health Network and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, Hialeah FL, September 14, 2016.

Dr. Jason Nieuwsma (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) presented the webinar Enriching the Provision of Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy Practice with ACT, in the VA’s ACT Mini Lecture Series in June.

Dr. Nieuwsma presented Moral Injury: Looking beyond PTSD as part of the Duke Southern Regional AHEC Grand Rounds at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center in July.

Briefings Vol 12 ★ Issue 5 ★ October 2016
Focus on the VISN

Welcome to our new MIRECC Fellows

Katherine Cunningham, PhD is the new Fellow at our Durham site. Katherine completed her PhD at the University of Tulsa and her pre-doctoral internship at the VA Maryland Healthcare System (Baltimore and Perry Point VAMCs). She has broad interests in empirically-based clinical care for Veterans and the role of cognition in the development, maintenance and recovery from PTSD. To date, her research has largely focused on the relationship between trauma-related shame and DSM-5 PTSD symptom presentation in Veterans and active-duty service members.

Mariah Delahanty, PharmD is a new Fellow at our Salisbury site. Mariah completed her BS in Biology at Emory University and her PharmD at Wingate University School of Pharmacy. She completed both a primary care pharmacy residency and psychiatric pharmacy residency at the Salisbury VA. Mariah’s practice and research areas include posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and antipsychotics. She serves to support the didactic component of psychiatric rotations for medical, PA, and pharmacy students and residents by providing lectures on substance use disorders and monitoring parameters for psychotropic medications. She is looking forward to expanding her research to include suicide prevention and substance use disorders.

Erin D. Kurtz, PhD is the new Fellow at our Richmond site. She received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the Virginia Consortium Program in Clinical Psychology in Norfolk, VA and completed her doctoral internship at the VA St. Louis Health Care System. Erin’s clinical training on internship included PTSD treatment with OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and Veterans with MST, general mental health, inpatient psychiatry, Primary Care Mental Health Integration, and psycho-oncology. Her research background is in traumatic stress and resilience, post-deployment mental health, depression, and alcohol and substance use within a couples/family context. Her dissertation research examined PTSD risk and protective factors in female OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, using data from the VISN 6 MIRECC PDMH database. Erin looks forward to continuing research with the MIRECC PDMH study as well as furthering research interests in resilience, women Veterans, and PTSD treatment outcomes. In her free time, she enjoys reading, trying new restaurants with her husband, and exploring new parks with her dog.

Invited Lectures

Drs. Jason Nieuwsma (Associate Director, Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care) Heather King & Karen Steinhauser co-presented Partnership between the Durham VA HSR&D COIN and VA Mental Health and Chaplaincy Program at the Durham VA Health Services Research and Development Monthly Seminar in September.

Drs. Treven Pickett (MIRECC Faculty, Richmond site) Christopher Murphy & Meghan Geiss co-presented Military Culture and Deployment-Related Mental Health Affecting Veterans and Their Families at Tidewater Community College on September 23, 2016. This 3.5 hour presentation was at the invitation of Give an Hour a nonprofit providing free mental health services to military members, Veterans, and their families.

Blueprint for Excellence Strategies 1, 2, 7, 8

Nieuwsma JA, Cantrell WC, Meador KG. Using systems redesign to integrate chaplaincy with mental health services. Workshop

Park C (Chair) and Nieuwsma JA (Discussant). Religiousness and military veterans – Impact, religious coping, spiritual struggle, and interventions. Symposium
Publications

Books


Book Chapters


Magazine Articles


Journal Articles


Abstract: Chaplains play an important role in supporting the mental health of current and former military personnel; in this study, the engagement of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Army, Navy, and Air Force chaplains with suicidality among their service users were examined. An online survey was used to collect data from 440 VA and 1,723 Department of Defense (DoD) chaplains as part of the VA/DoD Integrated Mental Health Strategy. Differences were noted for demographics, work setting characteristics, encountering suicidality, and self-perceived preparation for dealing with suicidality. Compared to DoD chaplains, VA chaplains encounter more at-risk service users, yet feel less prepared for dealing with suicidality.


Briefings

Vol 12 ★ Issue 5 ★ October 2016
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**

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 trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress. It includes tools to help manage anxiety, anger, sleep problems and more.

**Parenting for Service Members & Veterans**

This course helps parents learn how to address both everyday parenting challenges as well as family issues unique to military families.

NC4VETS Resource Guide

This Resource Guide is produced and published by the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist and educate veterans in learning about state and federal veteran benefits.

http://www.nc4vets.com/blog/resource-guide
CBOC Mental Health Rounds
Each CBOC MH Rounds presentation is now offered twice a month:

**PTSD and Insomnia**
Wednesday Dec 14 from 9-10 am ET & Thursday Dec 15 from 12-1 pm ET
Remember to register in TMS in advance to attend and receive credit.

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If you require assistance contact:
- EES Program Manager - Tim.Walsh2@va.gov
- Education Tech - Jessica.Denno@va.gov

PACERS is pleased to announce a new “Dementia and Delirium” education module in our curriculum on cognitive disorders. Each module is accredited for 1 hour of CE and is available to VA providers in the VA Talent Management System.

**Dementia and Delirium**  
**TMS ID 29817**

Dementia is a major public health concern, affecting over 5 million Americans, of whom over 560,000 are Veterans. The incidence of dementia increases with age, with more than 90% of those affected aged over 60 years. It is one of the most costly chronic conditions that the VA treats and its financial impact is expected to grow with the increasing number of aging Veterans. This course will describe two of the most common neurocognitive disorders that occur among elderly:

**Dementia and Driving**  
**TMS ID 28776**

One of the most challenging issues clinicians must address when working with Veterans with dementia is declines in driving skills. Approximately 30-45% of persons with dementia continue to drive, placing them at risk for becoming lost, crashing, and other adverse events. Clinicians have recognized a gap in knowledge regarding how to address diminished driving skills and decision-making for drivers with dementia. This training module will provide practical information that clinicians and health care teams can use in their work with older drivers with dementia and their families.

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](http://www.ahecconnect.com/citizensoldier)

**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**

**Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals**  
[http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture](http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture)

**Module 1: Self-Assessment & Introduction to Military Ethos**

**Module 2: Military Organization & Roles**

**Module 3: Stressors & Resources**

**Module 4: Treatment, Resources & Tools**
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