

PSR Fellow Education Dissemination Projects 2022-2023

SAN DIEGO - Kenya Johnson - Dual Recovery and Financial Readiness

This quality improvement project focused on the effects of a dual recovery group psychotherapy on motivation and readiness to change addictive behaviors, symptoms of psychosis, social connectedness, and financial awareness as it relates to addiction. Informed by principles of Motivational Interviewing and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for SUD, a ten-session psychotherapy group was developed to address dual recovery and financial readiness for Veterans diagnosed with psychosis and substance use disorders at the San Diego VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center.

MILWAUKEE - Gretchen Klein, Kadeesha Duncan, and Diane Rhyne - Creating a Bridge Group: Domiciliary to PRRC

Fellows worked with the IACT team at Milwaukee's domiciliary to format a bridge group for veterans in the IACT program. Veterans in the program used transportation to come to the outpatient mental health site from the Dom. Attendance of veterans during group was tracked as well as these veterans' engagement in the PRRC after discharge from Dom following participation in this group.

SAN DIEGO - Jamie Rodriguez, Katelyn Keeling - A Psychospiritual Approach to Healing the Wounds of Trauma

The healing of morally injurious wounds is critical in the treatment of trauma. Trauma cannot fully be resolved until the wounds to the internal self beneath the trauma are addressed. Such wounds have not been systematically studied in Veterans with serious mental illness (SMI). The aims of this project included addressing moral injury in Veterans with SMI using a nine week interdisciplinary, psychospiritual group intervention. It combined Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and pastoral/spiritual care. Evaluation of the intervention included assessment of the effect of intervention on distress related to morally injurious wounds, cognitive inflexibility, and self-efficacy.

WEST HAVEN - Benjamin Bayley - Navigating the Surprisingly Complex Toxic Exposure Screening Process: A Pilot Project at VACT

Mr. Bayley and an Environmental Health Coordinator set up an information table in Primary Care at the main Hospital to provide outreach about the PACT Act and new Toxic Exposure Screenings and the potential benefits. They were able to schedule Screenings on the spot. They spent one morning a week and may have been the first VA to have such a pilot directly in primary care.

CHEYENNE - Randall Macey, Amber Miles, Tyson Buffington, Abigail Self – Assessing Interest, Availability, and Accessibility of After-hours Mental Health Care at the Cheyenne VA

This was an examination of the interest in, availability and accessibility of after-hours mental health care from veteran and clinician perspectives. With the influx of younger Veterans in the VHA system, due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the fellows wanted to identify barriers to care within the standard 8:00 am - 4:30 pm service models, for Veterans who are students, homemakers, or full/part-time employed. They surveyed Veterans to learn if they would take advantage of evening or weekend hours and what model of service they would prefer (in-person, VVC, or a combination of both). Surveys were completed by veterans currently receiving mental health care at the Cheyenne and Northern Colorado MH clinics

and current mental health care providers to determine need, barriers, and facilitators to providing after/out-of-hours mental health care.

BEDFORD - Jacklyn Jones, Isabell Chanell, Margo Singer, Roxy Chavez - Understanding Implicit Bias among Veterans with Serious Mental Illness at the Bedford VA

Bedford VA staff as well as Veterans served through the Bedford VA, have noticed occurrences of negative interactions between Veterans who experience serious mental illness and various providers at the Bedford VA. This year, PSR fellows elected to support programming related to improving the experience of Veterans with serious mental illness as well as providing awareness of and education on implicit bias. Staff members were surveyed and a given brief vignette, to understand their perception of serious mental illness including any implicit bias toward/against those with serious mental illness. The feedback obtained guided the PSR fellows in designing an educational intervention for providers within the Bedford VA to help reduce negative bias.

DURHAM - Kaylee Richmond Danyelle Smith, MSW, LCSWA, Jennifer M. Manis, MSW, MDiv., Modupe Edogun, LCSWA, LCASA - Assessing Veterans' Perceptions of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusiveness within the PRRC

The purpose of this project was to assess the embodiment of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the PRRC clinic at Durham through the veterans' perspectives. Fellows assessed DEI at the PRRC through the dissemination of a climate survey to veterans and two focus groups. Veterans shared pertinent experiences, beliefs, and suggestions for improvement to make the clinic a more inclusive environment for all. Given healthcare inequities of marginalized veterans, understanding veterans' perspectives of DEI in these clinics is necessary for facilitating competent and quality care to all veterans and can help inform organizational change. Our project served the VA's ICARE mission, specifically "Advocacy" by conducting a climate survey and focus groups that centered around veterans' perspectives and through "Excellence" by ensuring highest quality care and commitment to continuous improvement of our clinics as it relates to DEI.

DENVER Sarah Grazel-Ward – Recovery Through Growth Mindset

Recovery Through Growth Mindset was a 16-week in person curriculum that challenged Veterans to review their recovery journeys in the context of growth, resiliency, relationships, self-esteem and hope. The project utilized a Growth Mindset framework developed by Dr. Carol Dweck in classroom settings.

DENVER Aaron Lerner – Community Through Gaming

This project developed a virtual interest and support group where veterans met once a week to discuss gaming experiences, practice gaming through roleplaying games, Veterans learned to use gaming as a way to build community and engagement.

WEST HAVEN Eliseo Barajas - Recovery Practice: Contributing to Early Psychiatry Trainees' Community Psychiatry Training

Dr. Barajas designed a lecture on Recovery-Oriented Care: which covered its history and showcased the role of peer support in care. It was presented to Yale's 1st year psychiatry resident physicians rotating at the West Haven VA and its Errera Center (PRRC).

PALO ALTO - Stephanie Houk - Best Practices for LGBTQ+ Affirming Veteran Care

Participants in this project were provided with information about sexual orientation and gender identity, listened to the historical experiences of LGBTQ+ service members. Based on information gained, Fellows chose one recommendation to implement to improve LGBTQ+ affirming Veteran care and thereby decrease mental health stigmatization of this community.

LITTLE ROCK - Paige Thompson, Jamison Woodward – Aging Well with Mental Illness Educational Fact Sheet

The VA has a significant population of Veterans with Serious Mental Illness (SMI). Research has shown that people with SMI experience accelerated aging and die younger than their peers (Wertz, et al., 2021). Therefore, the fellows created a two-sided education sheet to teach Veterans diagnosed with SMI about symptoms of natural aging as well as healthful habits to slow its progression. The tool will be provided to various VA departments who serve Veterans with SMI and VA whole health programs.

Wertz, J., et al. Association of history of psychopathology with accelerated aging at midlife. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2021 Feb 17; e204626. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.4626

PALO ALTO - Julie Galeota, Stephanie Houck, Roxanne Ramirez – Stigmatization Through Language

The project addressed ways that stigmatization of Veterans with SMI, can occur through provider language. Recommendations for micro, mezzo, and macro-level interventions to counteract stigmatization were provided to VA providers.

WEST HAVEN - Kirstin Gutierrez - Early Psychosis Intervention Utilizing an Occupational Therapy Lens

This project developed psychoeducation program materials for caregivers of veterans who have recently experienced early psychosis. It incorporates traditional psychosis education, along with recovery and role-development themes.