

MID-ATLANTIC MIRECC UPDATE

In the News



The Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) in Durham published the results of their qualitative exit interviews from the RRD-funded pilot study of supervised exercise in older Veterans with PTSD. This was a collaborative piece amongst our GRECC, MIRECC, and HSRD colleagues, in which the lead author was **Dr. Julia Browne** (above), a new Advance GRECC Fellow. In addition, **Dr.**

Katherine S. Hall (below), Associate Professor in Medicine (GRECC), served as the senior author and Principle Investigator. To read more about the study, click [here](#).



In 2019, the Duke University School of Medicine published an article relating to the study that focused on the ["Warrior Wellness for Older Veterans with PTSD."](#) Today, a subsequent larger clinical trial stemming from this pilot study is now underway and recruiting patients. The trial is called "Warrior Wellness" and will compare six months of Supervised Group Exercise versus a Health Aging Education

on PTSD symptoms and physical functioning in older Veterans with PTSD.

Honors & Awards



Dr. James (Trey) Bateman (previous MIRECC Fellow, and current Staff Behavioral Neurologist at Salisbury VAMC) was announced the winner of the 2021 Lina Mae Edwards Young Investigator Research Grants, and will be awarded \$100,000 for his project titled "Autonomic Biomarkers of Mild Behavioral Impairment in AD/DR." To read more about the research, click [here](#).

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



At VISN 6 MIRECC we are genuinely committed to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at varied organizational levels. Thus, a new DEI task force has been formed to start compiling the views and ideas that will lead to a thoughtful DEI statement for our new website. **Drs. Cindy Swinkels** (MIRECC's Co-Associate Director of Clinical)

and **Wilfredo López-Ojeda** (MIRECC's Assistant Director of Education), are leading this group effort among other participants.

Education and Dissemination

Invited Lectures & Presentations

Blakey, SM. VA and DoD career pathways: clinically focused careers (part 2). Sponsored by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. **August 12, 2021.** Watch [here](#).

Blakey, SM. VA and DoD career pathways: research focused careers (part 1). Sponsored by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. **April 29, 2021.** Watch [here](#).

López-Ojeda, W. Human Plastinates Technology for Medical Training and Education. Wake Forest School of Medicine, Department of Undergraduate Medical Education. **July 27, 2021.** Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, NC.

López-Ojeda, W. TolTech's 3D Anatomy and Virtual Reality Technology Demonstration for Medical Training and Education. Carolinas Simulation Center, Wake Forest School of Medicine/Atrium Health. **June 21, 2021.** Atrium Health Medical Center, Charlotte, NC.

Nieuwsma, JA. & Wortmann, J. Motivational interviewing and problem-solving training. Bureau of Navy Medicine Chaplains. **August 5 & July 22, 2021.** Portsmouth, VA; San Diego, CA.

Nieuwsma, JA. Truth and Fiction: The power of stories. Baylor Scott & White Clinical Pastoral Education Program. **July 27, 2021.** Temple, TX. Virtual.

Nieuwsma, JA. & Parker, R. Covid-19: Suicide prevention and spiritual care. Durham VA Mental Health Journal Club. **June 25, 2021.** Durham, NC. Virtual.

Research Presentations

Borges, LM., Barnes, SM., Norman, SB., Nieuwsma, JA., & Bahraini, NH. Responding to moral distress and moral injury in the time of COVID-19: Intervention and prevention for providers, veterans, and service members. Presented at the Annual VA/DoD Suicide Prevention Conference. **May 20, 2021.** Virtual.

Nieuwsma, JA., Sanders, VC., & Wortmann, J. Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) for chaplains: Self-care and client-care applications. Professional development intensive. Association for Professional Chaplains Annual Conference. **June 9, 2021.** Virtual.

Smigelsky, MA., Cantrell, W., and Nieuwsma, JA. A model for collaboration between chaplaincy and mental health in health care settings. Association for Professional Chaplains Annual Conference. **June 11, 2021.** Virtual.

Sullivan, S., Nieuwsma, JA., & Meador, KG. Collaborating in care: Ministry and mental health. Association for Professional Chaplains Annual Conference. **June 10, 2021.** Virtual.

Poster Presentations

López-Ojeda, W., Hurley, RA. Extended Reality Technologies in Medical Education and Clinical Practice. 38th American Association of Clinical Anatomists (AACA) Meeting. **June 28, 2021.** Virtual.

Martindale, SL & Rowland, JA. Effects of Blast Severity on Symptom Presentation and Cognitive Performance. 2021 Military Health System Research Symposium. **August 23, 2021.** Kissimmee, FL. Disclosure: Canceled due to COVID-19.

FOCUS ON THE VISN

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Technology & Innovation



On July 29, the VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Kenersville hosted an Extended Reality (XR) Neuroanatomy demonstration. Touch of Life Technologies (TolTech), among others (Varjo, Lenovo) supported the hardware, software, and other devices for this amazing XR demonstration featuring TolTech's integrated systems for medical education and clinical care. The field of medical innovations is rapidly evolving into the fascinating world of virtual reality technology and its subcategories (i.e., augmented reality, mixed reality). **Dr. Wilfredo López-Ojeda** (MIRECC's Asst. Director of Education), and TolTech's Anatomy Team (Laura Weinkle, Jake Shearer and Tom Chelston) led by Greg Spitzer (CEO) delivered a riveting and engaging remote-learning demonstration for our MIRECC leadership team, including **Drs. John Fairbank** (Director), **Jennifer Naylor** (Deputy Director) and **Robin Hurley** (Associate Dir. of Education). Research and medical education participants from Wake Forest School of Medicine, Salisbury and Kenersville VAMC joined the hands-on active learning demonstration and participated in the virtual activities using one of the latest XR technology systems in the market.

Program Updates



On June 15, Integrative Mental Health (formerly Mental Health and Chaplaincy) hosted a special presentation on Collaborative Moral Injury Care. IMH welcomed two guest presenters: Dr. Pat Pernicano and Chaplain Kerry Haynes of the South Texas VA Healthcare System. This team presented their 4-week moral injury psychoeducation curriculum, which was developed as part of their quality improvement work in IMH's Dynamic Diffusion Network, and for which they were awarded a Clinical Education Grant from the South Central MIRECC. IMH also announced a new Moral Injury Consultation program that is open to all mental health providers and chaplains who are interested in moral injury, with emphasis on moral injury conceptualization, collaborative care, and practice development. Consultation requests can be initiated by emailing moralinjuryconsult@va.gov.

Education and Dissemination

Transitions



Dr. Cindy Swinkels, MIRECC's Co-Associate Director of Clinical, is now the Acting VISN 6 Evidence Based Practice Subject Matter Expert. She will provide support to the VISN Chief Mental Health Office, Dr. David Buyck and the seven facilities within the VISN 6 catchment. She will help promote EBP training and provide coordination between facilities and the National EBP Program office.



Dr. Anna Ord (MIRECC's Postdoctoral Fellow, Salisbury site) completed her two-year program in June 2021 and has accepted a position at Regent University, her Alma Mater, as the Department Chair for the Department of Graduate Psychology. Her new role will include teaching and providing training to graduate students in Psychology.

New Hires



Anna Fink, BA, is the new Program Assistant with Integrative Mental Health. She is a graduate of Duke University with a major in Psychology and a minor in Cultural Anthropology and French Studies.

To develop, disseminate and apply scientific knowledge and best practices to enhance post-deployment mental health and wellness for our Nation's Veterans and their families.

Publications

Armistead-Jehle, P., Shura, RD., & Denney, R. (July 2021). Memory performance validity tests in assessing head injury. In C. R. Reynolds and A.M. Horton Jr. (Eds.), *Detection of Malingering in Head Injury Litigation* (3rd ed.). Springer Nature. ([Read more](#))

Bjork, JM., Reisweber, J., Burchett, JR., Plonski, PE., Konova, AB., Lopez-Guzman, S., Dismuke-Greer, CE. (July 30, 2021). Impulsivity and Medical Care Utilization in Veterans Treated for Substance Use Disorder. *Journal of Subst Use Misue*. ([Read more](#))

Blakey, SM., Tsai, J., & Elbogen, EB. (March 17, 2021). Drinking to cope with posttraumatic stress: A nationally representative study of men with and without military combat experience. *Journal of Dual Diagnosis*. ([Read more](#))

Blakey, SM., Halverson, TF., Evans, MK., Patel, TA., Hair, LP., Meyer, EC., DeBeer, BB., Beckham, JC., Pugh, MJ., Calhoun, PS., & Kimbrel, NA. (July 22, 2021). Experiential avoidance is associated with mental and medical health diagnoses in a national sample of deployed Gulf War veterans. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*. ([Read more](#))

Elbogen, EB., Lanier, M., Blakey, SM., Wagner, HR., & Tsai, J. (May 5, 2021). Suicidal ideation and thoughts of self-harm during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of COVID-related stress, social isolation, and financial strain. *Depression and Anxiety*. ([Read more](#))

Gutner, CA., & Wells, SY. *Implementation Science: developing a common understanding for use in mental health*. In G. Asmundson (Ed.). *Comprehensive Clinical Psychology*, 2nd Edition. Elsevier Ltd. (**In press**)

López-Ojeda, W., Hurley, RA. (July 21, 2021). Extended-Reality Technologies: An Overview of Emerging Applications in Medical Education and Clinical Care. *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*. ([Read more](#))

Martindale, SL., Shura, RD., Cooper, MA., Womack, SF., Hurley, RA., Vair, CL., & Rowland, JA. (August 11, 2021) Operational Stress Control Service: An organizational program to support health care worker well-being. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. ([Read more](#))

McDonald, SD., Walker, WC., Cusack, SE., Yoash-Gantz, RE., Pickett, TC., Cifu, DX., VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Workgroup, & Tupler, LA. Health symptoms after war zone deployment-related mild traumatic brain injury: Contributions of mental disorders and lifetime brain injuries. *Brain Injury*. (**In press**)

Rothman, DJ., McDonald, SD., Walker, WC., & Feldman, G. (July 13, 2021). Olfactory changes after military deployment are associated with emotional distress but not with mTBI history. *American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*. ([Read more](#))

Shura, RD., Armistead-Jehle, P., Rowland, JA., Taber, KH., & Cooper, DB. (June 17, 2021). Self-Reported Neurobehavioral Symptoms in Combat Veterans: An examination of NSI with mBIAS symptom validity scales and potential effects of psychological distress. *Psychological Assessment*. Advanced online publication. ([Read more](#))

Shura, RD., Yoash-Gantz, RE., Pickett, TC., McDonald, SD., & Tupler, LA. (June 22, 2021). Relations among performance and symptom validity, mild traumatic brain injury, and posttraumatic stress disorder symptom burden in post-deployment veterans. *Psychological Injury and Law*. ([Read more](#))

Wells, SY., Brennan, CL., van Vorhees, EE., Beckham, JC., Calhoun, PS., Clancy, CP., Hertzberg, MA., & Dillon, KH. The impact of Hostility on quality of life, functioning and suicidal ideation among Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. (**In press**)

Wells, SY., Walter, KH., Strasshoffer, D., Schnitzer, JS., Dedert, EA., Thorp, SR., Morland LA., Glassman, LH. Do older veterans experience change in posttraumatic cognitions following prolonged exposure therapy and relaxation therapy? (**In press**)w

RESOURCES FOR VETERANS & FAMILIES



(MI), click [here](#).

Visit **Self-help resources** to obtain education and support information for Veterans, friends and family members who may be facing mental health challenges. VA specialists have assembled a short list of reviewer's recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the most appropriate information for you. We have a new education pamphlet on Moral Injury

Please click on each resource topic for more information.

- **General Mental Health**
- **Depression & Anxiety**
- **PTSD**
- **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)**

For additional help, click "[How to Use](#)."

ONLINE LIFE TRAINING SKILLS 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. For more information, click [here](#).



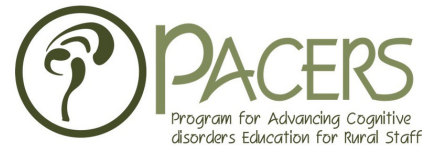
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS



The DMVA 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.

The 2020 edition is now available. View or Download by clicking [here](#).

PROVIDER EDUCATION



PACERS is an education program for health care staff who care for Veterans with cognitive disorders and their caregivers. While this program targets rural health care staff, providers working in any setting can benefit from this information.

The PACERS online training curriculum includes six e-learning courses; each course is accredited for 1 hour of continuing education. There are also 5 videos that cover important topics related to cognitive impairment, including driving, self-neglect, challenging behaviors, Alzheimer's disease, and end-of-life.



VA Providers: Take courses using TMS links
Non-VA Providers: Use TRAIN links

Course 1: Driving and Dementia—Hanging up the Keys.
Course 2: How to Deliver the Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease.
Course 3: How to Have an End of Life Discussion.
Course 4: How to Identify Self-Neglect.
Course 5: Addressing Decision Making and Safety in Dementia.

VISIT [PACERS](#) for links to each course.

HSR&D CYBERSEMINARS

UPCOMING HSR&D CYBERSEMINAR

September 7, 2021
(2pm-3pm EST)

Prazosin for Posttraumatic Headache Randomized Controlled Trial in Veterans and Active Duty Service Members.

By Murray Raskind, MD
 Cynthia Mayer, DO

To register, click [here](#).



UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR NATIONAL CBOC MENTAL HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS

September 8 & 10:
Eating Disorders (9am-10am EST).

October 13 & 14:
MST and Courage Group (9-10am EST).

November 17 & 18:
Ethics and Adjusting to Post-Pandemic Life (9am-10am EST).

For direct links to webinars, click [here](#).

BRIEFINGS



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Next Issue: December 2021