

THE VISN 5 MIRECC MATTERS

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(VISN 5) Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center

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VA SPECIAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN ADVANCED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

Submitted by Sarah Morris, Ph.D.

The VISN 5 MIRECC is accepting applications for two 2-year post-doctoral/post-residency fellowships; one each in Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry. The goal of this Fellowship Program is to train psychologists and psychiatrists to become leading clinical researchers in the area of serious mental illness. The fellowship provides excellent opportunities for training in psychosocial treatment development, family and community intervention, health services research, neurocognition, and psychopharmacology in an outstanding collaborative and interdisciplinary setting. In addition, MIRECC fellows have access to a range of educational activities and advanced clinical service delivery in a variety of settings. The program combines individual mentored research and clinical training in the fellow's area of interest with general educational experiences focused on biostatistical methods, health informatics, grant writing, career development, and the latest scientific findings and advances. The distribution of the fellow's effort is approximately 75% research and 25% clinical. Applicants for the psychology fellowship must have graduated from an American Psychological Association accredited graduate program and internship in either clinical or counseling psychology. Applicants for the psychiatry

fellowship must have completed ACGME accredited residency training, be board eligible/certified, and have an active unrestricted U.S. license to practice. All fellows must be US citizens. Individuals who are interested in applying for the fellowship beginning in the Fall of 2005 should contact Sarah Morris, PhD. (Psychology) at sarah.morris2@med.va.gov, or Paul Ruskin, MD (Psychiatry) at Paul.Ruskin@med.va.gov.

M-PROVE: THE MARYLAND PROGRAM FOR VOCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Submitted by Wendy Tenhula, Ph.D.

In spite of the fact that most individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) express a desire to work, about 80% of these individuals in the United States are chronically unemployed or under-employed. Although the VA has long recognized the need for vocational rehabilitation programs to facilitate meaningful work for patients with SMI and has begun implementing state of the art programs, studies of supported employment programs find that approximately 50% of participants remain unemployed. Among those patients who do get jobs, job retention rates are quite low (less than 50% stay in jobs more than 6 months). The most frequently cited reasons for job terminations among patients with SMI include interpersonal problems in the work place and difficulty coping with symptom exacerbations.

We have recently received a grant from the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Division to develop and evaluate a psychosocial intervention, called the Maryland Program for Vocational Effectiveness (M-PROVE). M-PROVE is designed to augment existing vocational rehabilitation programs (CWT/VI) by targeting the skills needed for reintegration into community work settings and to facilitate job retention among persons with SMI. M-PROVE combines elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) with work-related social skills training and problem solving training (SST). The CBT module of the treatment is designed to help reduce residual symptoms of mental illness and help patients develop strategies to cope with symptom exacerbations when they occur. The SST social skills and problem solving modules are designed to help patients improve their interpersonal functioning at work.

I am very excited to report that we will begin enrolling patients in the study in 2005. The MIRECC research team is looking forward to working closely with the vocational rehabilitation staff and other clinicians in Baltimore, Perry Point, and Washington, DC in an effort to understand if M-PROVE can make a difference in veterans' lives. We will recruit patients for the study as they are beginning jobs through enrollment in the CWT program at the VA, as this is a critical time period for them to develop the skills needed to perform well and retain employment. Our ultimate hope is that we will develop and implement a program that can improve work function and job retention among persons with SMI, and thereby enhance their social role functioning and quality of life. If you would like further information about this study, please contact Dr. Wendy Tenhula at 410-605-7455 or wendy.tenhula@med.va.gov.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES OF THE MENTALLY ILL: MEETING THE CHALLENGES AND REAPING THE REWARDS

Submitted by Cynthia Clark, RN

Our Fall 2004 family conference, "Working with Families of the Mentally Ill: Meeting the Challenges and Reaping the Rewards" was held on October 18th at the Maritime Institute of Technology and Training Center in Linthicum, and attracted 131 participants. The focus of this conference was on involving families and partnering with clinicians in order to enhance the care given to mentally ill veterans. Topics included discussion of evidence-based practice models, such as MacFarland's Family Psycho-Education model, NAMI's Family-to-Family Program, the Support and Family Education (SAFE) Program, and family interventions for patients with a dual diagnosis. In addition, clinical staff presented techniques that can be used to effectively engage families in the treatment process. Finally, a panel of family members shared what it was like for them as they navigated the health care system with their loved one.

We invite you to participate in our next family conference! Watch upcoming issues of this newsletter for more information.

ANNUAL MARYLAND SCHIZOPHRENIA CONFERENCE A GREAT SUCCESS

Submitted by Toni Tinnirella, BA

Over 375 Schizophrenia researchers, health care professionals and other interested persons gathered at Martin's West on Tuesday, November 16, 2004, to learn the latest research findings on understanding, diagnosing and treating schizophrenia and related disorders.

The conference was very important in providing information to the health care professionals and family members of individuals with this disorder. Dr. Anthony Lehman, Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (SOM) was the master of ceremonies for the day-long conference. The morning presentations were treatment-oriented: Dr. Alan Bellack, Director of the VISN 5 MIRECC and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland SOM, spoke on the treatment of co-morbid substance abuse in patients with schizophrenia. Dr. Faith Dickerson, Director of Psychology at Sheppard Pratt Health System and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland SOM, spoke about the use of cognitive behavioral therapy for the treatment of positive symptoms of schizophrenia. Dr. Robert Conley, Chief of the Inpatient Program at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland SOM, presented an update regarding the newest antipsychotic drugs. Dr. John Boronow, Chief of the Inpatient Psychotic Disorders & Medical Director for Adult Services at Sheppard Pratt Hospital and Associate Clinical Professor, Volunteer Faculty, at the University of Maryland SOM, Department of Psychiatry, discussed the use of polypharmacy, particularly with respect to the new generation antipsychotic medications. In addition, a legislature recognition award was presented to the Honorable Senator Thomas M. Middleton from Charles County who, as Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, has given strong support for legislation to bolster the financial health of community mental health services in Maryland. Following these presentations, a consumer gave a moving personal account of her path toward recovery.

The afternoon program started with the presentation of the Maryland Service Award to Mr. Ted Miller. Diane Cabot, Regional Director of MHA, highlighted his contributions at the Bay View Pathways Program and the Players anti-stigma project. This award is given to a resident of Maryland who has benefited people with

schizophrenia through clinical innovations, research, advocacy, or a special form of service. Other afternoon presentations focused on the research and implementation of evidence-based practices. Dr. Howard Goldman, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland SOM, gave an overview of efforts within the state to implement “evidence-based practices”. The conference closed with Dr. Jonathan Book, Clinical Director of Springfield Hospital Center and Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland SOM, discussing the barriers of implementing “evidence-based practices” in the current mental health system.

This annual conference is sponsored by the University of Maryland SOM, Maryland Psychiatric Research Center (MPRC), NAMI Maryland, the Mental Health Association of Maryland, Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland, MIRECC, and Sheppard Pratt Health System. For information about next year’s conference, please watch upcoming issues of this newsletter, or visit the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center website at www.mprc.umaryland.edu and click on News and Events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Understanding and Treating PTSD in Women

May 16, 2005
Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel, Baltimore

This one-day conference will bring together nationally known experts to discuss the latest developments in the treatment of civilian and military-related PTSD in women. The attendees will understand the concepts relevant for comorbid substance use in women with PTSD and assess common physical health issues reported by women with PTSD.

For more information, please contact Kim Gordley, Chesapeake Health Education Program (CHEP), at kim.gordley@med.va.gov, or (410) 642-2411 x 5403.

National MIRECC Conference

June 5-8, 2005
New Orleans, Louisiana

This second national MIRECC conference is designed to:

1. Disseminate evidence-based research about suicide assessment, dual diagnosis, and treating new veterans as mandated by the New Freedom Commission;
2. Discuss relevant MIRECC research in these areas and promote collaboration among MIRECCs and co-sponsors (e.g., American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Readjustment Counseling Service, Department of Defense, MH QUERI, etc);
3. Promote development of effective clinical techniques among providers; and
4. Provide additional training and professional development for MIRECC Fellows.

For more information, please contact Michael R. Kauth, Ph.D., Co-Director for Education, South Central (VISN 16) MIRECC, at michael.kauth@med.va.gov.

Management of Violence in the Psychiatric Setting

September 30, 2005
Meeting site to be determined

The latest developments in the pharmacological and behavioral management of violence in psychiatric settings will be presented by national leaders on this topic.

For more information, please contact Kim Gordley, Chesapeake Health Education Program (CHEP), at kim.gordley@med.va.gov, or (410) 642-2411 x 5403.
