



Houston

Center of Excellence

Director: Laura A. Petersen, MD, MPH

Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2011

The Houston Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) Center of Excellence (CoE) theme, "From Encounter to Policy: An Integrated Approach to Improving Quality of Care for Veterans," capitalizes on our unique capabilities and strengths in health services research. These include patient-doctor communication, outcomes measurement, implementation science, patient safety, healthcare quality, and health policy. The CoE uses available resources to 1) support, mentor and develop outstanding research leaders; and 2) produce excellent science that impacts practice, policy, and patients in the Veterans Affairs (VA) health-care system. The CoE was founded in 1990 and has been successfully renewed thereafter. Laura Petersen, MD, MPH, FACP, was named CoE Director in May 2007. Our organizational chart details the CoE leadership, organizational structure, and affiliated partners. A stable portfolio of resources maximizes our ability to reach the community, the state, and the nation. Our physical space consisting of 35,000 contiguous sq. feet on the McGovern campus in the Texas Medical Center is generously provided by the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (MEDVAMC) and contributes to productivity and collaboration. The MEDVAMC is a member institute of the Texas Medical Center and a primary health-care provider for more than 122,000 Veterans, including over 10,000 Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans.

Looking to the future, our "VA Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence (CREATE)" concept paper was approved. Dr. Petersen is the proposed PI for the CREATE application, "Improving Quality and Safety through Better Communication and Coordination in PACT: Toward Real-Time Measurement and Point-of-Care Tools." Our teams are working on each of our four projects and will submit a full CREATE application in December 2011.

The CoE is organized into four scientific programs, as follows:

1. The Health Decision-Making and Communication Program is led by Program Chief, Richard Street, PhD, who is an internationally known expert in health care communication. Members of this Program study the decisional and communication processes used by patients and providers as they interact in medical settings, with the goal of enhancing patient participation in the care process, maximizing patients' ability to manage their chronic health problems, and ensuring care for Veterans in line with patients' and families' values and preferences.
2. The Health Services Delivery and Organization Program is led by CoE Associate Director, Mark Kunik, MD, MPH, an internationally known geriatric psychiatrist who specializes in the needs of dementia patients. Members of this Program study innovative interventions and modes of care delivery, with the goal of implementing research findings into health care for Veterans.
3. The Health Policy and Quality Program is led by Hardeep Singh, MD, MPH, an internationally known expert in patient safety and health information technology. Members of this Program study the effects of local, state, and federal governmental policies on the health of populations, access to care, efficiency and quality of care, and health technology related to the electronic medical record, with the goal of using this knowledge to influence health policy and improve the quality of health care for Veterans.
4. The Clinical Epidemiology and Outcomes Program is led by Program Chief, Hashem El-Serag, MD, MPH, an internationally known expert in the epidemiology of Hepatitis C and related diseases. Members of this Program study the distribution and determinants of health-related outcomes in specific populations, with the goal of controlling health problems in Veterans.

The members of each program seek to provide outstanding leadership and scholarship to produce the best science in their area while collaborating effectively with the other scientific programs. In addition, three programs serve core functions across the four scientific program areas above: the Design and Analysis Program (led by Jessica Davila, PhD) supports the four scientific programs in methods, statistics and programming; the Education Program (led by Aanand Naik, MD) oversees junior faculty and postdoctoral fellowship training (described under "Training Activities"); and the Operations group (led by Cynthia Nelson, BS) provides grant submission and management, human resources and administrative functions that support the CoE.