

Portland

Research Enhancement Award Program

Director: Linda K. Ganzini, MD, MPH,

Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2011

The Portland Center for the Study of Chronic, Comorbid, Mental and Physical Disorders, located at the Portland VAMC, is an HSR&D Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP). The Center's academic affiliate is Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). The program is under the leadership of Linda Ganzini, MD, MPH, Director and David Hickam, MD, MPH, Associate Director. In FY2011, the Center continued its success in building capacity and developing its research program. Coming into 2012, we have six funded investigators with continued emphasis on mental disorders, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain, suicide, mental disorders in cancer patients, traumatic brain injury, health disparities, and health informatics including MyHealthVet. We continue to be successful in training junior investigators and have three funded HSR&D career development awardees (CDAs) and a National Institutes of Health (NIH) K-awardee. A strength of our Center is the degree to which investigators are also active clinicians seeing patients and managing patient care programs.

The members of our Center have spent considerable time and energy preparing for our reapplication as a Center of Innovation (COIN) and developing a program project grant through the Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence (CREATE) initiative. Our original focus on suicide, around which we had a very productive meeting with our partners in October 2011, has evolved into a focus on care transitions in mental health care for Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, and will take full advantage of the partnerships we have developed and built on in our REAP strengths. This will be a major focus of our next REAP steering committee meeting.

The Center has completed its complement of permanent hires with REAP core funds, including: our administrative officer, data analyst, institutional review board specialist, statistician, and medical anthropologist. We also maintain a contract with OHSU for specialized statistical advice.

We continue to build upon our strong portfolio in informatics and eHealth with the leadership of Drs. Susan Woods and David Hickam. Dr. Woods is the Portland site director for the eHealth Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI), a virtual research center focused on enhancing and studying the use of patient-facing technologies that enhance patient access, help manage their conditions, and engage in decisions about their healthcare. Dr. Woods is also the National Associate Director for eHealth, Patient Care Services. She has a newly funded proposal through QUERI on integrating secure messaging into team care delivery (RRP 11-409). Dr. Hickam is a core investigator for the VA Consortium for Healthcare Informatics Research (CHIR) and is the lead investigator for the CHIR applied project on PTSD (HIR 09-003). Both of these collaborative programs establish Portland as a leading center for informatics research in the VA.

We are pleased at the progress of our HSR&D career development awardees (CDAs). Kathleen Carlson, PhD, MS, whose doctorate and expertise is in occupational injury epidemiology, is in the second year of her CDA. She is studying the prevalence and predictors of traumatic brain injury and PTSD in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans. Dr. Carlson is among several investigators at our Center focusing their research on the mental health issues of OEF/OIF Veterans. Dr. Hickam is her primary mentor, and her CDA is funded through 2014. REAP resources are being used to

support her needs for data extraction and data analysis. Christopher Slatore, MD, MS, started his three-year HSR&D CDA in February of 2011. His CDA proposal will examine Veterans' views on and experiences with lung cancer evaluation. REAP resources were used to assist with grant applications, to facilitate applications to the institutional review board for his studies, and for data analysis for several underfunded studies.

Maya O'Neil, PhD, was hired as a statistician and core investigator with the HSR&D REAP and Evidence-based Synthesis Program at the end of FY2010. During FY2011, she worked on multiple research projects and grant proposals in this capacity. She served as a statistician, methodologist, and data manager for projects by our CDAs. She also provided analytic plans for newly submitted HSR&D grants and secondary analyses in several projects whose funding has expired. These projects focused on topics of high priority to the VA and included prostate cancer (David Hickam), intensive care unit/lung cancer (Christopher Slatore), traumatic brain injury (Kathleen Carlson), PTSD (Elizabeth Goy), service utilization in PTSD (Mary Lu), substance use disorders and pain (Benjamin Morasco), palliative care (Elizabeth Goy and Linda Ganzini), and suicide prevention (Steven Dobscha and Lauren Denneson). Dr. O'Neil has presented research findings at multiple national conferences and meetings, including the VHA Improvement Forum, the VA Chief Medical Officer and Quality Management Officer face-to-face meeting, and the VA Equity Research Conference.

REAP resources were additionally used to assist investigators in completing secondary analyses and in publishing data from previously funded VA studies. They were also used to initiate pilot studies for new research directions and pilot projects for junior investigators with CDAs and/or NIH K-awards that lead to publications supporting new VA research proposals. Dr. Benjamin Morasco, who is the recipient of an NIH K-award and who is mentored by Dr. Dobscha, has been very productive this year. He has published several studies on the topics of pain, hepatitis C, and substance abuse. He and Dr. Tara Macey described high rates of chronic opiate use among OEF/OIF Veterans (Macey et al, Pain Medicine 12:1502-1509, 2011). His study of adherence to clinical guidelines for opioid therapy for patients with both chronic pain and substance abuse disorders revealed the need for more intensive treatment and showed a high risk for poor outcomes (Morasco et al, Journal of General Internal Medicine 26:965-971, 2011). Dr. Morasco will use this data to develop an HSR&D investigator initiated research proposal for substance abuse in the spring of 2012.

Dr. Christopher Slatore examined patient and clinician communication in Veterans with lung disease. He also described the relationships between insurance status and disparities in lung cancer practices outcomes. This study informed his recently funded HSR&D CDA on communication with Veterans undergoing lung cancer evaluation. Drs. Goy and Ganzini analyzed previously gathered data on the prevalence and natural history of neuropsychiatric syndromes in Veterans enrolled in home hospice. The results showed a rising burden of psychiatric disability to include: depression, sleep disturbances, cognitive impairment and delirium before death. These findings support the need for ongoing mental health treatment for Veterans in hospice care (Goy and Ganzini, Journal of Pain and Symptom Management 41:394-401, 2011).

NEWLY FUNDED HSR&D SERVICE GRANTS

IIR 10-331 Veteran Interactions with VA Primary Care Prior to Suicide
PI: Steven Dobscha, MD

SDR 11-403-1 Veterans, Researchers and IRB Members Experiences with Recruitment Restrictions
PI: Linda Ganzini, MD, MPH

NRI 10-125-2 Acupuncture for Symptom Management in Veterans with Hepatitis C
PI: Patricia Taylor-Young, PhD, RN, FNP

RRP 11-409 Integrating Secure Messaging into Team Care Delivery Workflow
PI: Susan Woods, MD, MPH