



# VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Post Deployment Mental Health

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## Research Component Update MIRECC researcher featured!



CDMRP is featuring a video vignette of **Dr. Christine E. Marx** (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research) talking about her DoD funded research on their website: <http://cdmrp.army.mil> The video is also available at: [http://cdmrp.army.mil/pubs/video/prm/marx\\_video.shtml](http://cdmrp.army.mil/pubs/video/prm/marx_video.shtml)

### *A Proof-of-Concept, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Study of Ganaxolone in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*



Dr. Marx is a co-lead investigator with Dr. Ann Rasmuson from the Boston VA on this newly launched clinical trial of a novel potential treatment strategy for PTSD. Seven VA sites are participating in this effort, as part of a Department of Defense Consortium led by Dr. Murray Stein at UC San Diego. A total of 120 patients will be enrolled over the course of approximately two years. Ganaxolone is a 3 $\beta$ -methylated synthetic analog of the neurosteroid allopregnanolone, a molecule with pronounced neuroprotective and anxiolytic actions in preclinical models.

Allopregnanolone levels appear to be lower in patients with PTSD and depression, and thus it is possible that replenishing neurosteroids could be a logical new therapeutic approach to mitigate PTSD symptoms.

## Clinical & Education Components Update



## North Carolina Institute of Medicine *shaping policy for a healthier state*

NCIOM's *Task Force on Behavioral Health Services for the Military and Their Families* recently released their recommendations to improve the provision of services and supports to meet the behavioral health needs of service members in the state when federal resources are not available. **Drs. Kudler, Hurley and Straits-Tröster** of our MIRECC served on the Task Force.

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### Approved Research Sites & Contacts:

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**The report is available at:**

<http://www.nciom.org/publications/?honoring-their-service-a-report-of-the-north-carolina-institute-of-medicine-task-force-on-behavioral-health-services-for-the-military-and-their-families>

In addition, the North Carolina Medical Journal recently featured a policy forum that addresses the behavioral health needs of North Carolina service members, veterans, and their families. Several members of our MIRECC contributed articles.

**Invited Commentaries**

**Mira Brancu, Kristy Straits-Tröster, Harold Kudler.** *Prevalence rates and best practices for the treatment of behavioral health conditions among military personnel and Veterans.* North Carolina Medical Journal 2011; 72: 54-60

**Harold Kudler, Kristy Straits-Tröster, Mira Brancu.** *Initiatives to improve access to behavioral health services in the Veterans Affairs health system.* North Carolina Medical Journal 2011; 72: 40-42.

**Sidebar**

Robert Goodale, William Abb, Jessica T. Meed, Thu-Mai Christian, **Harold Kudler, Kristy**

**Straits-Tröster.** *The Citizen Soldier Support Program: A Case Study.* North Carolina Medical Journal 2011; 72: 55.

**Outreach to Providers****Supervision for Clinicians Listening to Trauma Histories****Facilitator: Dr. Harold Kudler**

Psychiatrist & MIRECC Associate Director

Therapists treating PTSD often find themselves in parallel turmoil, as they react to the patient's inner and outer worlds. Good clinical supervision is essential, but in addition to receiving guidance and support from an experienced colleague, having the opportunity to share one's often turbulent emotions and figuring out how these can be used to better understand the case is also important. Participation available in person (Durham VA) or by audio-teleconferencing.

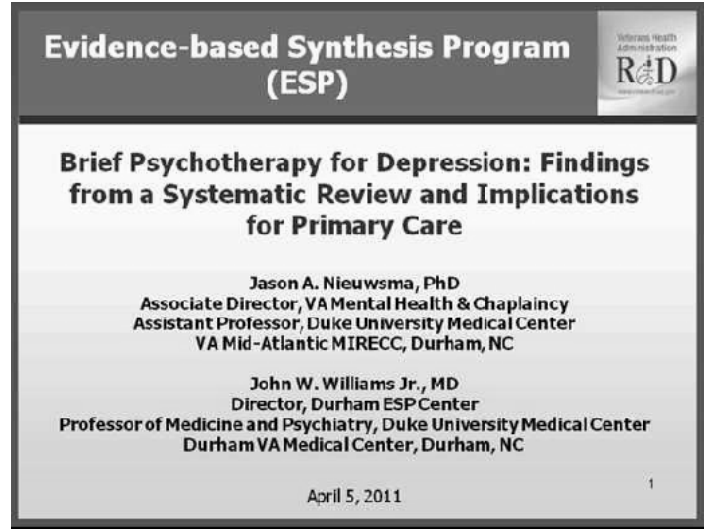
**Purpose:** Assist presenter in processing a case that is particularly disturbing and hard to let go of.

Register to participate or present a case at an upcoming session by contacting Jaimie Marinkovich ([jaimie.marinkovich@va.gov](mailto:jaimie.marinkovich@va.gov); 919-286-0411 ext 5554).

**Upcoming sessions: May 25 June 8 July 20**

**Resources for Providers**

There were 300 attendees when **Dr. Jason Nieuwsma** (MIRECC researcher) presented his work in the VA's Evidence Based Synthesis program - a new record for this series of cyber seminars!

**To view the seminar go to:**

[http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for\\_researchers/cyber\\_seminars/archives/esp-040511.cfm](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/archives/esp-040511.cfm)

This evidence synthesis has also been published.

**Brief Psychotherapy for Depression in Primary Care: A Systematic Review of the Evidence**

Principal Investigators: Jason A. Nieuwsma, Ph.D.; Co-Investigators: Ranak B. Trivedi, Ph.D.; Jennifer McDuffie, Ph.D.; Ian Kronish, M.D.; Dinesh Benjamin, M.D.; John W. Williams Jr., M.D., M.H.Sc.; Medical Editor: Liz Wing, M.A.

Evidence-based Synthesis Program (ESP) Center, Durham VA Medical Center, Durham, NC

Washington (DC): Department of Veterans Affairs; February 2011

**To download the paper go to:**

<http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/brief-psychotherapy.cfm>

**Book Chapters**

**Straits-Tröster K, Gierisch J, Calhoun PS, Strauss JL, Voils C, Kudler H.** *Living in Transition: Young Veterans' Perspectives on the Post-Deployment Shift to Civilian and Family Life.* In: Kelly D, Howe-Barskdale S, Gitelson D (eds), *Treating Young Veterans: Promoting Resilience Through Practice and Advocacy.* New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company 2011: 153-172.

Anderson K, **Hurley RA, Taber KH.** *Functional Imaging.* In: Silver JM, McAllister TW, Yudofsky SC (eds). *Textbook of Traumatic Brain Injury 2nd Edition.* Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press 2011: 91-113.

**Butler DL, Hurley RA, Taber KH.** *Assessment and Treatment in Polytrauma Contexts: Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD.* In: Ruzek JI, Schnurr PP, Vasterling JJ, Friedman MJ (eds). *Caring for Veterans with Deployment-Related Stress Disorders: Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond.* 2011: 87-108.

## Outreach to Veterans & Families Valentines for Veterans Concert

On February 13 Little Anthony and the Imperials rocked the Progress Energy Center for the Performing Arts in Raleigh, NC to show support for our nation's Veterans. About 1600 Veterans, family members, and guests witnessed an amazing musical tribute with complimentary tickets provided by the Durham VA Medical Center and Help Hospitalized Veterans. In February of each year, VA Medical Centers across the country hold a weeklong *National Salute to Veterans* with special activities. This event was an opportunity to entertain and to inform Veterans and their families about many available VA services, including the new *Families at Ease* call center which provides coaching to family members seeking to engage their Veteran family member in VA care post-deployment.



**Dr. Kristy Straits-Tröster** (left) and her niece, Madison Straits, volunteered during the event to help get the word out about the *Families at Ease* program. The Durham, NC *Families at Ease* call center is staffed and coordinated by our MIRECC. The national *Families at Ease* call center number is (888) 823-7458. For more information visit their website: <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/familiesatease>

### Meeting Presentations

**Stevens FL, Taber KH, Hurley RA.** *Anterior Cingulate Cortex: Understanding its Role in Neuropsychiatric Illness.* American Neuropsychiatric Association 22nd Annual Meeting, Denver CO, March 23-26, 2011.

**Strauss JL.** *Self-Management and Complementary-Alternative Interventions for Veterans with PTSD.* Annual HSR&D Career Development Conference, National Harbor MD, February 2011.

**Taber KH, Hurt SD, Gordon KB, Hurley RA.** *OEF/OIF Veterans with mild TBI Following Exposure to Primary Blast Forces: Neurological Soft Signs.* American Neuropsychiatric Association 22nd Annual Meeting, Denver CO, March 23-26, 2011.



MIRECC personnel **Drs. Katherine Taber and Robin Hurley** (on left) at a working session of the Education Committee at the American Neuropsychiatric Association annual meeting in March 2011.

### Invited Lectures

**Dr. Mira Brancu** (Managing Director, MIRECC Registry Project) presented "*Self-care Workshop for Hospice Care Nurses and Staff*" at the Palliative and Hospice Care unit of the Community Living Center, Durham VA Medical Center, Durham, NC.

**Dr. Christine Marx** (MIRECC Co-Associate Director, Research) presented "*Pregnenolone Targeting Cognitive and Negative Symptoms in Schizophrenia*" at the International Meeting on Steroids and the Nervous System, Torino, Italy, February 19, 2011 and "*Neurosteroids as Candidate Biomarkers and Novel Therapeutics in TBI and other CNS Disorders*" at the Traumatic Brain Injury Conference, Washington, DC March 7, 2011. She also presented "*Neurosteroids as Novel Therapeutics and Candidate Biomarkers In Schizophrenia, PTSD, and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)*" as part of a panel at the 44th Annual Winter Conference on Brain Research, Keystone CO, January 26, 2011.

**Dr. Robin A. Hurley** (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) presented "*Window's to the Brain: Veterans, TBI and PTSD*" as a keynote speaker at the North Carolina Association on Higher Education and Disability Spring conference, High Point University, High Point NC, March 11, 2011.

**Dr. Jason A. Nieuwsma** (MIRECC Researcher) presented "*Integrating acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) with chaplaincy*" to Durham VA Medical Center chaplains; Durham, NC, February 2011.

**Dr. Jennifer L. Strauss**, (MIRECC Researcher) presented "*A Conversation about Women and Trauma: Epidemiology, Diagnosis, Treatment Consideration, and All That Lies In Between*" at the AORN Tarheels East Spring Seminar, Chapel Hill, NC, February, 2010.



## Most Read Article!

March 2011 Edition

**Medscape Psychiatry**  
from WebMD

TOP TEN

## Most Read Articles

Top 10 most-read articles by Psychiatrists last month:

### 5 At War With Mental Illness: Caring For Troops and Veterans

Bret Stetka, MD; Richard H. Weisler, MD; Henry A. Nasrallah, MD; **Harold Kudler, MD**

### Project Update! Registry

In response to the feedback we received at our successful annual Advisory Board meeting last December, as well as to emerging areas of critical need, three collaborative workgroups have been formed:

Women Veterans Workgroup  
Opioid and Pain Workgroup  
Subthreshold PTSD Workgroup

The workgroups will bring investigators interested in each topic together in order to improve topic-related data collection and data quality in the Registry. In addition, the workgroups will help to generate ideas for publications.

### ★ Free ★ Web Courses for Providers

*Treating the Invisible Wounds of War*  
[www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier](http://www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier)

Click on **New Users** to register. You will then see the available web courses listed:

- 1 - *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*
- 2 - *Traumatic Brain Injury*
- 3 - *Issues of Women Returning from Combat*

These courses were developed by MIRECC faculty in collaboration with Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) and North Carolina Area Health Education Center (NC AHEC). They are designed to help primary care physicians, case workers, mental health providers - who may see a veteran or family member on an unrelated issue - develop a better understanding of the culture in which veterans and their families live and work, and provide best practices for identifying, assessing and treating mental health problems that result from the trauma of war.

### Noon V-tel Lecture Schedule:

#### May 13

Dr. Brian McMahon (Virginia Commonwealth University)  
*Workplace Discrimination and Mental Illness:  
Findings from the National EEOC ADA Research Project*

#### June 10

Dr. Shane McNamee (Chief, PM&R, Richmond VAMC)  
TBA

This series is presented by V-tel and audio conferences. We are having increasing participation from sites outside VISN 6, so our assigned numbers may change. The number that each VISN 6 site will use to dial in will be included in an email notification prior to each presentation.

If you wish to attend from a site outside of VISN 6, please contact Mary Peoples ([mary.peoples1@va.gov](mailto:mary.peoples1@va.gov); 704-638-9000 ext 2956) so she can make the necessary arrangements.

### Invited Lectures

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**Dr. Katherine H. Taber** (MIRECC Assistant Director, Education) presented "*Windows to the Brain: Past, Present, Future*" at the Complex Systems Institute, University of North Carolina, Charlotte NC, January 28, 2011. She presented "*Windows to the Brain: Combat-Related Mild TBI*" as the keynote speaker for the Traumatic Brain Injury Technology Challenge at Lincoln Laboratories, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lexington MA, April 11, 2011. She will also serve as a reviewer for this competition.

**Drs. Hurley and Taber** also presented "*Window's to the Brain: Understanding the Neuroanatomy of Reward Circuits*" in the pre-meeting Neuropsychiatry 101 workshop at the 22th Annual Meeting of the American Neuropsychiatric Association, Denver CO, March 23, 2011.

Visit our web site for more resources

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6.asp>