



VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Post Deployment Mental Health



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Major Milestone:

Registry Study Passes 2,000!!!

Establishing a mental health registry of post deployment OIF/OEF era veterans was one of the first goals our MIRECC when it was established in 2004. The Registry Study was launched in June, 2005, with enrollment of the first participant at the Durham VAMC site. The Salisbury VAMC quickly followed suit, enrolling its first participant in November, 2005. Two more sites, Hampton VAMC and Richmond VAMC, came on board in 2006. On November 1, 2011, the 2000th Registry participant was enrolled! That this accomplishment was realized in only 6 years is a compelling credit to the directors, interviewers, and staff at the four participating sites. It is all the more remarkable considering the time involved. Each participant almost always requires a full day.

Although ambitious from the start, the scope of the Registry measures expanded during its 6 year history. Added were measures of coping, resiliency and social support. At the beginning, all measures were completed on paper and then painstakingly entered into an electronic database. Direct electronic entry of information by participants themselves was first implemented at the Durham site in June 2006 and quickly expanded to all sites. By November, 2007, all data entry for questionnaires was fully electronic. The project also pioneered an electronic version of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV-TR Axis I Disorders (SCID-I). As the Registry study moves forward, other benchmarks will arise, but this one is special: 2000 participants, 6 years, and a wealth of data!

Welcome to a New MIRECC Fellow



Kelcey Stratton, PhD is the new MIRECC Fellow at our Richmond VAMC site. She received BA degrees in Psychology and in French Language and Literature from the University of Oregon, and earned her MA and PhD in Clinical Psychology at The New School in New York, NY. She completed her clinical internship at the James J. Peters VAMC in Bronx, NY. Kelcey's dissertation examined treatment adherence and therapeutic alliance in cognitive therapy. Kelcey's clinical training has focused on evidenced-based treatments for personality disorders and anxiety disorders.

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Saule Kulubekova is the new MIRECC Fellow at our Salisbury site. She received a BS in Computer Science from University of North Carolina at Charlotte, an MA in Clinical Psychology from Emory University, and is completing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Emory University. She completed her clinical internship at the Spark M. Matsunaga VAMC in Honolulu, HI.

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Approved Research Sites & Contacts:

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Welcome to a New MIRECC Fellows

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Kelcey's research interests include evaluating psychotherapy interventions and outcomes, and better understanding risk and resiliency factors for PTSD. When not busy with clinical and research activities, Kelcey enjoys cooking, travel, watching soccer matches with her husband, and reading.

Book Chapters

Taber KH, Hurley RA. *Deployment-Related Brain Injuries: Neurobiology and Clinical Management*. In: Coping with Blast-related Traumatic Brain Injury in Returning Troops - Wounds of War III, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series – E: Human and Societal Dynamics Volume 86. IOS Press; 2011: 39-48.

Meeting Presentations



**Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
45th Annual Convention
November 10-13, 2011, Toronto ON**

Symposium: J.A. Nieuwsma (Chair),
Brief psychotherapy outside the mental health clinic: Evidence and innovations for expanding access to care.

Nieuwsma JA, McDuffie J, Trivedi RB, Williams JW Jr.
Efficacy of brief psychotherapy for depression in primary care.

Tenhula W, Karlin B, Nieuwsma JA, Nezu AM, Nezu CM.
Project "Moving Forward:" Problem-solving training for returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Poster:

Nieuwsma JA, Meador, KG. *Bridging chaplaincy and mental health care: Training clinical chaplains in evidence-based approaches to caring for persons with mental illness.*

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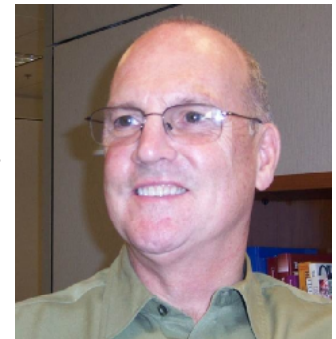
Welcome to a New MIRECC Fellows

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Saule's dissertation focused on computational modeling of adaptive behavior. Saule's research interests include treatment outcome studies and evidence based treatments for anxiety and mood disorders. In addition to her research activities, Saule plans to complete the clinical psychology licensure process and work to be board eligible in clinical neuropsychology by the end of her fellowship. She is fluent in Russian. Saule's other interests include modern and classical literature, art, film, day hikes, and travel.

New MIRECC Researcher

In August, we welcomed the Reverend Bill Cantrell, MDiv to our MIRECC. He is the new Chaplain for Education and Research for VA Mental Health & Chaplaincy. Chaplain Cantrell's present work examines the relationship between spirituality and health. One focus is the integration of VA and military chaplains into Mental Health Services, in order to meet the spiritual healing and support that many veterans are seeking or need.



Chaplain Cantrell comes to us with a diverse background of military, parish and non-profit ministry. Most recently he was released from active duty after a three year recall to Navy Medical Center San Diego. He accomplished a great deal during his time in San Diego. In addition to completing four units of Clinical Pastoral Education, and supporting the WoundedWarrior Battalion, Oncology, Radiology and ICU units, he served as primary chaplain for the Special Psychiatric Rapid Intervention Team, and was an instructor for the Professional Development Training Conferences for Navy Chaplains. He also initiated the Navy Caregiver Occupational Stress Control program, and developed and facilitated PTSD spirituality groups for Intensive 8 week outpatient and 12 week residential programs.

In the News!

Dr. Robin Hurley (MIRECC Associate Director, Education) was one of the VA experts interviewed for this article, which appeared in *Year in Veterans Affairs & Military Medicine: 2011- 2012 Edition*.

Excerpts from "PTSD and TBI: Where Are We Now" by Craig Collins

....Dr. Robin Hurley is associate director for education at the VA's Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC). Her research has revealed a physiological link between PTSD and TBI. "The places where those three most common injuries to the brain occur – a subdural bleed, a contusion, or a third thing that we call diffuse axonal injury – are exactly the areas that control your emotion and memory circuits," she said. "That's exactly why we're seeing the co-occurrence of mental health conditions along with the things that we traditionally see with brain injury, such as dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and confusion." The frequent comorbidity of PTSD and TBI have led to a revision of the VA's clinical practice guidelines, finalized in 2011, for the treatment of PTSD that include sections about frequently comorbid diagnoses, including TBI.

...According to Hurley and Friedman, PTSD and TBI are conditions that should concern anyone – but they shouldn't be feared. "Most people who are exposed to a mild concussion or brain injury are just fine and don't have any long-term symptoms," said Hurley. "Sometimes patients get really scared because of other reports and cases they've seen about patients with severe injuries. For those who do, the VA is well ahead of the curve in terms of screening and in terms of having a standardized, national, comprehensive system to care for them through our polytrauma program."

<http://www.defensemianetwork.com/publications/year-in-veterans-affairs-military-medicine-2011-2012-edition/>

Invited Lectures

Chaplain William Cantrell (Education and Research, VA Mental Health and Chaplaincy) presented “*Caring for Veteran’s After War: Post Combat Symptoms, Considerations and Responses from a Spiritual Health Perspective and Introduction of VA Mental Health & Chaplaincy Initiatives Promoting Integration of Chaplains in Mental Health Services*” at the After the Yellow Ribbon Conference, November 2011, Duke University, Durham, NC.

Dr. Jason A. Nieuwsma (MIRECC Researcher) presented “*Integrating Chaplaincy with Mental Health Care in the Department of Veterans Affairs*” at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, October 2011.

Drs. Kristy Straits-Troster (MIRECC Assistant Director, Clinical) and **Harold Kudler** (MIRECC Associate Director, Clinical) presented “*Co-Occurring Disorders in Veterans; It’s Not Just About PTSD*” as a webinar for the UNC-Greensboro Center for Youth, Family and Community Partnerships in October, 2011.

Meet Our Researchers!

Engaging Chaplains in Mental Health Care



This project is funded by Central Office and housed within our MIRECC. **Dr. Keith Meador** (right) directs the initiative, and **Dr. Jason Nieuwsma** (middle) serves as associate director. They recently welcomed two new people to the program. **Chaplain William Cantrell** (left) is the new Chief Chaplain and **Mr. Phillip Cobrand** (not pictured) is the new Management and Program Assistant.

Journal Articles

Hayes JP, Labar KS, McCarthy G, Selgrade E, Nasser J, Dolcos F; VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic MIRECC workgroup, Morey RA. *Reduced hippocampal and amygdala activity predicts memory distortions for trauma reminders in combat-related PTSD*. Journal of Psychiatric Research. 2011; 45(5): 660-669.

Nieuwsma JA, Pepper CM, Maack DJ, Birgenheir DG. *Indigenous perspectives on depression in rural regions of India and the United States*. Transcultural Psychiatry, 2011; 48: 539-569.

Meeting Presentations

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**International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
November 3-5, 2011, Baltimore, MD.**

Symposium: *Military Sexual Trauma: Complex Outcomes and Prevention of Multiple Layers of Betrayal*

Strauss JL, Marx CE, Weitlauf JC, Stechuchak KM, Straits-Tröster K, Worjolah AW, Sherrod CB, Olsen MK, Butterfield MI, Calhoun PS. *Association Between Trading Sex and Military Sexual Trauma Among Women Veterans*.

Workshop:

Kudler H, Straits-Troster K, McCutcheon S, Glynn S, Dekle J. *When a Service Member is Wounded, A Family is Wounded: New DoD/VA Policy and Practice in Engaging and Supporting the Families of Veterans*.

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Outreach to Providers

Group Supervision for Clinicians Listening to Trauma Histories

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. In addition to receiving guidance and support from an experienced colleague, having the opportunity to share one’s often turbulent emotions and learning how these can be used to better understand the case are also important.

Facilitator: **Dr. Harold Kudler**, Psychiatrist & MIRECC Associate Director - Clinical

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

Audience: Trauma clinicians and staff who routinely hear disturbing trauma histories

Objectives: As a result of participating, the attendee will be able to:

- Develop new personal and professional strategies and new clinical understanding;
- Recognize the potential effects of trauma narratives on therapists and staff;
- Identify the importance of on-going clinical supervision in work with trauma

Upcoming sessions: December 28

Participation available in person (Durham VA) or by audio-teleconferencing.

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

Meeting Presentations

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E A N

employee assistance network, inc.

Workshop:

Meed J, Straits-Troster K, Williams-Johnson S, Hall K. *Issues for Women in the Military—A Balancing Act*. presented at the North Carolina State Employee Assistance Professionals Association, October, 2011.

Noon V-tel Lecture Schedule:

January 13 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; 704-638-9000 ext 2956).

★ Free ★ Web Courses for Providers

Treating the Invisible Wounds of War
www.ahecconnect.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.

Durham MIRECC Research Lecture Series

December 15 *Meta Analysis of Neuropsychological Functioning in Euthymic Bipolar Disorder: An Update & Investigation of Moderator Variables* - Monica Mann-Wrobel, PhD, VISN 6 MIRECC, Durham, NC

This series is presented live at our Durham site. Occasionally, a lecture is opened up for live participation by audio-conferencing. Lectures are also archived as webcasts at: <http://mireccweb.biac.duke.edu/Mediasite/Viewer/>
 Contact Jaimie Marinkovich (jaimie.marinkovich@va.gov; 919-286-0411 ext 5554) with any questions.

Visit our web site for more resources

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