



MID-ATLANTIC MIRECC UPDATE

In the News



In March, Mental Health and Chaplaincy changed its program name to Integrative Mental Health (IMH). The shift reflects our ongoing commitments to key programmatic initiatives and our focus on the intersections of spiritual and psychosocial care as well as plans to adapt and expand efforts in other areas. For more information, click [here](#).



**Dr. Shannon Blakey**, (MIRECC Postdoctoral Fellow, Durham site) led a new VA study that found Veterans' combat experiences are associated with a higher risk of alcohol use to cope with PTSD symptoms. But the connection is weaker when accounting for the severity of the PTSD. In observational study of more than 11,000 men with at least one traumatic experience, the researchers found that those with combat experience were much more likely than those without to report drinking alcohol to cope with PTSD. The diversity of traumatic experiences, the severity of PTSD, and diagnoses of alcohol abuse or dependence were significantly tied to drinking to cope with PTSD.

However, combat experience was not strongly linked to drinking to cope when the researchers adjusted for a person's total number of PTSD symptoms. ([Read more](#))

Honors & Awards

**Dr. Robin Hurley**, MIRECC Associate Director of Education, served as President of the American Neuropsychiatric Association from March 2019 to March 2021. She will serve as Immediate Past President from March 2021 to March 2023.

**Dr. Shannon Blakey**, (MIRECC Postdoctoral Fellow, Durham site) was selected for the OAA Advanced Fellowship in Mental Illness and Research Treatment (MIRT) Book Award, which recognizes one first-, second-, and third-year MIRT fellow for outstanding research accomplishments.

Dr. Blakey also chaired a virtual professional development panel, sponsored by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies that focused on VA and DOD.

Webinars



**Dr. Nate Kimbrel**, MIRECC Co-Associate Director of Clinical, presented a 30-minute webinar entitled "Taking Care of Yourself and Your Loved Ones," as part of the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences mental health series. The webinars were designed to provide practical expert advice for Duke University and Duke Health community members and their families who may be struggling with different mental health challenges. ([Watch here](#))

Education and Dissemination

Transitions

**Dr. Sagar Lad** (MIRECC Postdoctoral Fellow, Salisbury site) will be completing his two-year program in August 2021 and has accepted a position at the Salem VA Medical Center as a Staff Neuropsychologist.

Invited Lectures & Presentations

**Hurley, RA.** *Windows to the Brain: understanding war-related mild TBI and its co-morbidities.* Grand Rounds, August University, Medical College of Georgia Department of Psychiatry and Health Behavior. **April 22, 2021.** Augusta, GA. Virtual.

**Hurley, RA.** *Windows to the Brain: updates in TBI and its comorbidities in times of COVID-19.* The NC Governor's Institute Annual Conference on Addiction Medicine. **April 10, 2021.** Virtual.

**López-Ojeda, W.** *Extended Reality In Clinical Care, Medical Training and Education.* Veterans Rural Health Resource Center, VHA Office of Rural Health. **May 27, 2021.** Virtual.

**López-Ojeda, W.** *Virtual Reality Technologies For Rural Health Medical Training.* VHA Central Office of Rural Health. **March 9, 2021.** Virtual.

Moretz, T., Womack, S., & **Hurley, RA.** (April 15, 2021) "Good Boundaries and Golden Rules in Mental Health." Grand Rounds, Salisbury VAMC Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences. **April 15, 2021.** Salisbury, NC. Virtual.

**Nieuwsma, JA.** *Moral Injury: Exploring indicators, Care Practices, and Opportunities for Interconnection.* Presented to the National Association of Social Workers-West Virginia & Kentucky Spring Continuing Education Conference. **May 14, 2021.** Virtual.

**Nieuwsma, JA.** *ACT for Clergy and Pastoral Counselors.* Invited podcast interview recorded for the Open Div Summit. **February 9, 2021.** Virtual. ([Read more](#))

Research Presentations

**Nieuwsma, JA.** *The Mental Health and Chaplaincy Dynamic Diffusion Network.* In G.L. Jackson (Chair), *Diffusion of Innovations within the Nation's Largest Integrated Healthcare System: the VHA Innovation Ecosystem in Action.* Presentation and panel discussion presented at the Society for Behavioral Medicine Annual Meeting. **April 13, 2021.** Virtual.

Poster Presentations

**Lad, S., Bhakta, S., Hira, V.** *Mental Health and Perceived Awareness of the South Asian Indian Community during the COVID-19 Pandemic.* 5th Annual South Asian Mental Health Conference of the South Asian Mental Health Consortium. **March 13, 2021.** Virtual.

**López-Ojeda, W., Hurley, RA.** *Virtual Reality Technology Improves Neuroanatomical Imaging Depictions and Clinical.* 31st American Neuropsychiatry Association Annual (ANPA) Meeting. **March 19, 2021.** Virtual.

### Publications

Brown, RC., Mortensen, J., Hawn, SE., Bountress, K., Chowdhury, N., Kevorkian, S., **McDonald, SD.**, Pickett, T., Danielson, CK., Thomas, S., & Amstadter, AB. *Drinking Patterns of Combat-exposed Veterans: the Role of Personality, Negative Urgency, and Posttraumatic Stress*. *Military Psychology*. **(In press)**

**López-Ojeda, W., Hurley, RA.** (May 21, 2021). *Sexual Dimorphism in the Brain Development: influence on affective disorders*. *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*. **([Read more](#))**

McKee, GB., **McDonald, SD.**, Karmarkar, A., & Ghatas, MP. *Demographic Characteristics, Mental Health Conditions, and Psychotherapy Use of Veterans in Couples and Family Therapy*. *Couple and Family Psychology: research and practice*. **(In press)**

Perrin, PB., **McDonald, SD.**, Watson, JD., Pierce, BS., & Elliott, TR. *A Telehealth Transition Assistance Program for Acute Spinal Cord Injury Caregivers: protocol for a Mixed-Methods, Randomized Clinical Trial*. *JIMR Research Protocols*. **(In press)**

**Ulmer, CS.**, McCant, F., Stechuchak, K., Olsen, M., Bosworth, H. (March 10, 2021). *Prevalence of Insomnia Disorder and Sleep Apnea in a Sample of Veterans at Risk for Cardiovascular Disease*. *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*. **([Read more](#))**

To develop, disseminate and apply scientific knowledge and best practices to enhance post-deployment mental health and wellness for our Nation's Veterans and their families.



## RESOURCES FOR VETERANS & FAMILIES



Visit **Self-help resources** to obtain education and support information for Veterans, friends and family members who may be facing mental health challenges. VA specialists have assembled a short list of reviewer's recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the most appropriate information for you. We have a new education pamphlet on *Moral Injury*

(MI), click [here](#).

Please click on each resource topic for more information.

- **General Mental Health**
- **Depression & Anxiety**
- **PTSD**
- **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)**

For additional help, click "[How to Use](#)."

### ONLINE LIFE TRAINING SKILLS FOR VETERANS

There are several free and anonymous on-line education and life coaching programs that use interactive exercises and video demonstrations to teach skills for overcoming life challenges. For more information, click [here](#).



## DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS



The DMVA Resource Guide is produced and published by the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist and educate Veterans in learning about state and federal veteran benefits.

The 2020 edition is now available. View or Download by clicking [here](#).

## PROVIDER EDUCATION



PACERS is an education program for health care staff who care for Veterans with cognitive disorders and their caregivers. While this program targets rural health care staff, providers working in any setting can benefit from this information.

The PACERS online training curriculum includes six e-learning courses; each course is accredited for 1 hour of continuing education. There are also 5 videos that cover important topics related to cognitive impairment, including driving, self-neglect, challenging behaviors, Alzheimer's disease, and end-of-life.



**VA Providers: Take courses using TMS links**  
**Non-VA Providers: Use TRAIN links**

- Course 1:** Driving and Dementia-Hanging up the Keys.
- Course 2:** How to Deliver the Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease.
- Course 3:** How to Have an End of Life Discussion.
- Course 4:** How to Identify Self-Neglect.
- Course 5:** Addressing Decision Making and Safety in Dementia.

VISIT [PACERS](#) for links to each course.



### UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR NATIONAL CBOC MENTAL HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS

**June 9 & 10:**  
**Military Sexual Trauma and Courage Group (9am-10am EST).**

**June 14 & 15:**  
**Updated Guide to Brief CBT (9-10am EST).**

**August 11 & 12:**  
**Racial and Social Inequities in Mental Health Practice (9am-10am EST).**

Check the website for previous webinars in this series available for credit in TMS.

For direct links to webinars, click [here](#).



## RESEARCH SITES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

### Durham VAMC

Rita M. Davison  
[rita.davison@va.gov](mailto:rita.davison@va.gov)  
919-384-8582 ext 4022

### Richmond VAMC

Torran Claiborne  
[torran.claiborne@va.gov](mailto:torran.claiborne@va.gov)  
804-675-5000 ext 4251

### Salisbury VAMC

Mary Peoples  
[mary.peoples1@va.gov](mailto:mary.peoples1@va.gov)  
704-638-9000 ext 12956

Leonard DeShield  
MIRECC Communications Specialist  
[leonard.deshield@va.gov](mailto:leonard.deshield@va.gov)  
704-638-9000 ext. 12959

CLICK THE BANNER TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Stay Up to Date on Mid-Atlantic MIRECC

Contact ([leonard.deshield@va.gov](mailto:leonard.deshield@va.gov)) to ensure you're on the mailing list to receive copies of our newsletter.



Next Issue: September 2021