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## HSR&D Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care



Volume 18, Number 1

### Center Activities

CMC3 would like to announce that Dr. Sherri LaVela, a Senior Staff member of CMC3 has accepted the appointment of Director of OAA/HSR&D PhD Post Doctoral Fellowship Program at CMC3.

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### Hines VA Hospital and Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Selected as Two of the Women's Health Practice-Based Network Sites

Edward Hines Jr., VA Hospital and Jesse Brown VA Medical Center are pleased to share the distinct honor to have been selected as two of the VA Women's Health Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN) sites. The VA Women's Health Practice-Based Research Network is a ready-to-use nationwide infrastructure of partnered VA healthcare facilities representing a pool of over 100,000 women Veterans who use VA services. The PBRN will facilitate the conduct of multi-site studies that include women Veterans. The PBRN draws on experience and insight of practicing clinicians to identify and frame research questions whose answers can improve women's health clinical practice in the VA. This network of partnered facilities will make it feasible to pursue a wide range of multi-site studies examining health and

health care of women Veterans. The site at Hines VA Hospital will be led by Dr. Theresa Pape, and co-led by Dr. Sudha Bhoopalam, Director of the Hines Women's Health Program. The site at Jesse Brown VAMC will be led by Dr. Howard Gordon and co-led by Dr. Denise Hynes.

In response to the reshaping of our Veteran population with the expansion of women in the military, women Veterans' health is a top VA priority. Identifying the need to support collaboration between clinicians and researchers, VA HSR&D recently funded the development of the national VA Women's Health Practice-Based Research Network to: 1. establish a ready-to-use infrastructure of Partnered VA healthcare facilities representing a substantial pool of women Veterans, 2. develop, test and document

research procedures for conducting multi-site studies of women Veterans, and 3. draw on experience and insight of practicing clinicians to identify and frame research questions whose answers can improve women's health clinical practice in VA.

Thirty-seven facilities from across the country have been selected to be part of this very important network. This network of partnered facilities will make it feasible to pursue a wide range of multi-site studies examining health and health care of women Veterans.

Additional benefits to this exciting opportunity include opening greater opportunities of research collaboration, participating in multi-site Quality Improvement initiatives, and being responsive to women Veterans' health issues, a national VA top priority.

### New Study at CMC3

#### Examining Telehealth Applications for Evaluation of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

Bridget Smith, PI  
Charlesnika Evans and  
Kevin Stroupe, Co-Inv.

A substantial number of Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Iraqi Freedom have experienced mild traumatic brain injury (TBI). To identify veterans who may benefit from treatment and services, VA implemented a national clinical reminder. Veterans who have a positive screen are then referred for a Comprehensive TBI Evaluation

(CTBIE). Despite these referrals, recent data suggests that as many as 25% of Veterans do not have a CTBIE to determine a diagnosis and develop a plan to treat symptoms. The aims of this mixed methods rapid response project are to (1) to characterize approaches to using telehealth to provide comprehensive TBI evaluations (CTEs); (2) examine the association between patient characteristics and use of telehealth to perform the CTE and outcomes associated with telehealth; (3) convene an

expert panel and develop recommendations to facilitate the implementation of telehealth strategies to provide comprehensive TBI evaluations; and (4) conduct preliminary cost analyses of the intervention to provide the foundation for the cost analyses for future larger interventions. The long-term goal of our proposed work is to improve the quality of life of Veterans who have mild TBI and other related conditions by developing an SDP to facilitate implementation of telehealth strategies to perform CTEs.

### **Current Weight Management Practices for Veterans with SCI/D across the VA System of Care**

Sherri LaVela, PI  
Ben Gerber, Fran Weaver,  
Sara Locatelli, Jenny Kiratli  
and Barry Goldstein Co- Inv.

Dr. LaVela's recently funded research study, "Current Weight Management Practices for Veterans with SCI/D across the VA System of Care," is expected to begin in Spring of 2012. Identifying and addressing weight management barriers has the potential to prevent negative consequences due

to obesity and weight gain in Veterans with chronic SCI/D, who are already predisposed to numerous complications and chronic conditions as a result of metabolic issues. There is limited documentation on what is successful, feasible, and suitable for implementation at VA facilities for successful weight management in Veterans with chronic SCI/D. Identification of what and how weight management strategies (for obesity treatment and

prevention) are being used across SCI Hub and Spoke facilities is key to facilitating weight management programs for persons with chronic SCI/D. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of current weight management practices among Veterans with chronic SCI/D, to build on concurrent SCI-QUERI obesity-related efforts and work toward the long-term goal of implementing VA's MOVE! weight management program in the chronic SCI/D cohort.

### **Dr. Charlesnika Evans Partners with COHIC on Research**

Since January, 2011, Dr. Evans has been working with the VA National Center for Occupational Health and Infection Control (COHIC) located in Gainesville, Florida, under the VA Office of Public Health. COHIC helps identify and solve important occupational health and infection control challenges facing the VA at the national and local level. Dr. Evans' role as an infectious disease epidemiologist with COHIC includes supporting current demonstration projects and leading future studies related to the COHIC mission. Dr. Charlesnika Evans at this time has partnered with COHIC to conduct a research study titled, "Effectiveness of High Dose Influenza Vaccine in Elderly Patients in the VA Healthcare System." Annual influenza vaccination is the primary and most effective method for preventing influenza infection and its complications. However, numerous studies have shown that the immune response to vaccination is much lower in the elderly versus younger adults. The new high dose (HD) influenza vaccine has been shown to illicit improved immunogenic responses compared to placebo or the standard influenza vaccine in randomized controlled trials. The VA recently (2010-2011 influenza season) allowed use of the HD influenza vaccine in elderly Veterans. The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the high dose influenza vaccine in elderly Veterans in prevention of influenza-like illness, lab-confirmed influenza, related healthcare-utilization, and all-cause mortality.

### **Dr. Sherri LaVela Partners with COHIC on Research Study**

Dr. Sherri LaVela and her team have an active partnership with the National Center for Occupational Health and Infection Control (COHIC), VA Office of Public Health to conduct a research study titled, "Instrument Development to Measure Respirator Comfort and Tolerability." The overall

objective of the project is to develop and validate a novel survey instrument to measure comfort and tolerability among healthcare workers when wearing filtering face-piece respirators. The instrument will be pilot-tested in a simulation lab during the early stages of the project and then used in an actual

clinical practice setting. The long-term objective is to use the developed instrument to obtain health care worker (HCW) feedback with respirator prototypes (for Project BREATHE) to determine how they compare in terms of comfort and tolerability, to the products currently available in the healthcare market place.

### Dr. Karen Saban is Recognized

Karen L. Saban, PhD, RN, APRN, CNRN, is a Research Health Scientist in the Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care (CMC3) at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital where she completed a three-year nursing postdoctoral fellowship in September 2010. She then received funding for her study NRI 10-123, "Stress and Inflammation in Family Caregivers of Traumatic Brain Injured Veterans" from October 2010 to September 2011. She currently has a Career Development 2 Award application under review and will be submitting an IIR in June 2012.

Her meticulous and rigorous research plan has had its rewards. She was recently promoted with tenure to Associate Professor in the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, Department of Health Management and Risk Reduction, Loyola University Chicago.

An article she co-authored received the 2011 Council on Cardiovascular Nursing Clinical Article of the Year award: DeVon, H., **Saban, K.L.** & Garrett, D.K. (2011). For Women Only: Recognizing and Responding to Symptoms of Heart Attack and Stroke. (8 April 2011). *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*.

She also recently had a chapter published in [Handbook of Stress Coping and Health](#).

Dr. Saban earned her PhD from Loyola University Chicago in 2006. She has a BSN and MSN in nursing administration also from Loyola University Chicago. She has over twenty years of experience as a neuroscience, critical care, and trauma nurse. She is a Fellow with the Chicago Institute of Medicine and is Chair of the Stress and Coping Research Section of the Midwest Nursing Research Society.

Dr. Saban's research interests focus on stress and psychosocial predictors of biomarkers of inflammatory disease. She is specifically interested in how cumulative and chronic psychosocial stress affects health. Findings from her study examining depression and diurnal salivary cortisol in informal caregivers of stroke survivors were recently accepted for publication in *Biological Research for Nursing*. She recently completed a study, funded by the VA Nursing Research Initiative, examining stress, inflammatory biomarkers, and perceived health of women informal caregivers of Veterans who experienced a traumatic brain injury. In addition, she is a co-investigator on several studies focusing on the coordination of care of TBI within VA, work stress among health care providers of patients with TBI, and quality of life and functional outcomes of persons who have experienced a traumatic brain injury.



Karen Saban, PhD,  
RN, APRN, CNRN

### Supplemental Funding for QUERI Vaccine Research

Both the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Health-care Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HIPAC) recommend that all health-care workers (HCWs) be vaccinated annually for influenza and advocate that health-care facilities should actively vaccinate HCWs as a part of a comprehensive respiratory infection control program. However, recent findings from RRP 10-046 (PI:

LaVela) have shown that the 2009-2010 influenza vaccination rate for HCW having direct contact with individuals with SCI/D was 48%. Although national HCW rates are slowly increasing (national influenza rates are 64%), rates have been at about 50% for multiple years for SCI HCWs and were even lower during a pandemic season when HCWs were prioritized for vaccine receipt. In January 2012, Dr. Sherri

LaVela received supplemental funding to continue her influenza vaccination work. In particular, the supplement will be used to survey HCW across the SCI/D System of Care at the end of the 2011/2012 influenza season. These rates provide baseline data for a future implementation science project to increase influenza vaccination in HCWs providing care to Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) that is in development.

### Inside Story Headline

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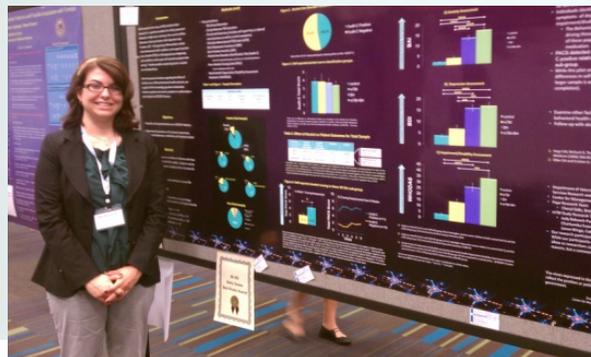
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**Dr. Amy Herrold** attended the American Congress of Rehabilitation Annual Meeting in October of 2011. At this meeting, she presented a poster on alcohol use and craving in Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan both with and without mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). This poster entitled, "Effects Of Alcohol Use On Patient Outcomes In Veterans with Mild TBI and/or Behavioral Health Conditions," included data collected as part of her CMC3-funded LIP award. Dr. Herrold was awarded the "Best Early Career Poster Award" from the Brain Injury Special Interest Group and the Early Career Course of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine. This poster award also includes free registration to next year's meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Amy Herrold. PhD



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### Selected Upcoming Presentations

Dr. Andrew Gawron and his mentor, Dr. Sherri LaVela, recently completed a study titled, *PPI Prescribing Patterns in Veterans with GERD*. Their findings will be presented as an oral presentation in a session on 'Advances in Management of Acid-Peptic Disorders' during Digestive Disease Week, to be held at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California, May 2012.

Dr. Carol Kostovich will be giving an oral presentation

titled, "A Rasch Analysis of the Presence of Nursing Scale" in March 2012 at Loyola University's Ruth K. Palmer Research Symposium. This annual symposium is held in the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing. She will also be presenting a poster with the same title at the symposium.

Dr. Charlesnika Evans will be presenting a poster at Anaerobe 2012: The 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial Congress of the Anaerobe Society in June

2012 in San Diego CA. The title of her presentation will be, "Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI) in Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders (SCI/D) Patients: Trends over Time and Risk Factors."

Dr. Michael Fischer will present a poster at the National Kidney Foundation Spring Clinical Meeting in May 2012. The title of the poster is, "Health Literacy and Medication Recon-

ciliation in Veterans on Chronic Hemodialysis."

Dr. Karen Saban is presenting a poster titled, "Predictors of Quality of Life among Wives Providing Informal Care to Veterans with TBI" at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Conference Midwest Nursing Society in April 2012.

If you would like further information about these presentations, please contact the center.