

# The Newsbrief

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Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care VA HSR&D Center of Excellence  
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## New Studies Starting

Below are highlights of the newly funded RRP's and IIR's.

### **Project Title: Prevalence, Management and Outcomes of Extraspinal Fractures in Spinal Cord Injury**

PI: Laura Carbone, MD, MS; Memphis VA , Co-PI: Frances M. Weaver, PhD; Hines VA

VA cares for a large number of veterans with spinal cord injuries (SCI) and these numbers are expected to increase with the return of combat veterans from OEF/OIF. Osteoporosis and osteoporotic-related fractures are a particular problem for veterans with SCI. In preliminary data 5% of all veterans with a traumatic SCI sustained an incident extra spinal fracture in one year, with the majority occurring in the lower extremities. In persons without SCI, osteoporotic fractures are associated with significant mortality and morbidity; however, the impact of these fractures on outcomes in persons with SCI is not known. In this HSR&D study, we will examine the associations between incident lower extremity fractures in persons with SCI and morbidity and mortality. We also will explore differences in surgical and non surgical treatment, utilization, antiepileptic drugs and post fracture osteoporosis medication prescribing patterns.

### **Project Title: Clinical Guidelines for ESA Use in Cancer: Impacts on Clinical Practice**

PI: Denise Hynes PhD, MPH, RN

"Clinical Guidelines for ESA Use in Cancer: Impacts on Clinical Practice" (VA HSR&D IIR 08-354-1) was funded for 2.5 years beginning April 1, 2009. Specific research aims are: (1) To examine the impact on anemia management patterns and healthcare costs over time of changes in clinical guidelines regarding the use of erythropoiesis stimulating agents (ESAs) for anemia management in cancer patients; (2) To examine associations between ESA use and adverse events (death or a thromboembolic event) among veteran cancer patients and the factors that contribute to occurrence of adverse events.

### **Project Title: Depression Care Facility-Level Variation for Persons with Multimorbidity**

PI: Neil Jordan, PhD

Inadequate rates of concordance with VA guidelines for antidepressant treatment among depression patients seen in primary care settings are the norm, and the problem is even more pronounced for depression patients with coexisting chronic conditions (depression-multiple chronic conditions [MCC]) because the competing demands model suggests that coexisting conditions compete with depression for attention during primary care visits. The objective of Dr. Jordan's study is to determine what facility and patient characteristics distinguish VA facilities that perform well in providing evidence-based depression care for persons with depression-MCC from VA facilities that are less successful. This 2-year study was funded by VA HSR&D and will begin October 1, 2009.

## **Project Title: Cost Effectiveness of Deep Brain Stimulation for Parkinson's Disease**

PI: Frances M. Weaver, PhD, Co-PI Kevin Stroupe, PhD

This study will examine costs and effectiveness of deep brain stimulation (DBS) for Parkinson's disease (PD). DBS is an accepted surgical alternative for symptom management for PD patients who suffer from the long-term complications of medication treatment, including motor fluctuations and severe dyskinesias. Stimulation of the subthalamic nucleus (STN) or the internal globus pallidum (GPi) regions of the brain have been shown to be efficacious in relieving motor symptoms. However, choice of surgical target may impact other outcomes including costs of care and health-related quality of life. This study will capitalize on a multi-site randomized trial of PD surgery (CSP #468) to gather additional information needed to assess cost-effectiveness of DBS by surgical target for persons with advanced PD. Total health care costs and disease-specific quality of life will be compared for patients randomized to receive STN vs. GPi DBS. Results of this study may aid decision makers determine the appropriate role of DBS in treating patients with PD.

## **Two People You Should Meet: Justin St. Andre, MA**

Justin St. Andre comes to us from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) where he worked as a Research Analyst in the division of Evidence Based Medicine. Most notably, Justin worked on a Clinical Practice Guideline for the nonsurgical treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee. Prior to AAOS Justin worked at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) within the Psychology Department's division of Behavioral Neuroscience. Justin's work focused on a paradigm called conditioned taste aversion whereby consumption of a novel food followed by gastrointestinal malaise (i.e. nausea) results in an aversion. This work is applicable to patients receiving chemotherapy whose intense nausea can cause dramatic weight loss and the cessation of treatment. His lab conducted initial research on the drug ondansetron (Zofran™) which is now commonly prescribed to patients undergoing chemotherapy to ameliorate nausea symptoms.

At Hines, Justin will be working as a project manager, currently focusing primarily on two of Dr. Bridget Smith's studies: Evaluation of TBI Screening Processes and Healthcare Utilization and Health Care Use and Costs of Veterans with Neurotrauma. He is also assisting in additional studies headed by Theresa Pape, Monica Steiner, and Vijaya Patil. Justin grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin and has lived in Chicago for almost ten years having completed his undergraduate degree at Loyola and his Masters degree at UIC. He currently lives in Lakeview with his partner.

## **Jennifer Hill, MA**

The history of Jennifer's love for research has its roots in her undergraduate education at the University of Missouri-Columbia. There, her mentor cultivated what he saw as "natural talent," by providing her with a variety of projects with varying responsibilities working with many different populations doing both quantitative and qualitative research. Jennifer has worked in rural towns on projects dealing with obesity, to medium security prisons involving social networks and their effect on recidivism.

Jennifer recently finished her Masters degree in Sociology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. As a graduate student she worked through a Graduate Research Assistantship program that provides credentialing opportunities to frontline family workers. She also worked with the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, and with a firm that provides research consultative services for nonprofit organizations.

In CMC3, Jennifer is the Project Manager for two of Dr. Charlesnika Evans' MRSA projects, and for two My HealthVet projects for Drs. Weaver and Hogan. She looks forward to continuing work with the interdisciplinary team of researchers at Hines and to continue learning.

Jennifer's personal life has been full of new and exciting news as well! She was married in April, started at CMC3 in May, bought her first home, and brought home a new puppy in July!

## **Our Newest Post Doc Fellow, Jennifer Humensky, PhD**

Jennifer Humensky joined CMC3 in August 2009 as a PhD post-doctoral fellow. She completed her PhD in Public Policy at the University of Chicago, June 2009.

Her dissertation examined the relationship between mental health and socioeconomic status (SES). Her committee included Willard Manning, Anirban Basu, David Meltzer and Benjamin Lahey. The dissertation utilized data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (AddHealth) and employed hierarchical modeling. She found that adolescents with substance use had lower educational attainment at follow-up in early adulthood (8 years later). However, attending a school with access to psychological or emotional counseling was associated with improved outcomes for adolescents with substance use, as was living in a neighborhood where people look out for one another (greater collective efficacy). She also found that individuals with high SES in adolescence reported higher use of alcohol, marijuana and cocaine in early adulthood. Cocaine use in early adulthood was associated with reduced educational attainment, so it is possible that cocaine use is lowering the socioeconomic trajectory of these individuals. In addition to her dissertation work, she had the opportunity to add questions to a clinical research study examining depression in adolescence. She was able to examine how the students felt that depression affected their ability to do well in school.

Prior to her doctoral work, she received a Master's in Public Policy (MPP) at Georgetown University and worked as a research analyst at Mathematica Policy Research in Washington, DC.

Dr. Humensky's mentors at CMC3 are Drs. Denise Hynes and Kevin Stroupe. She is interested in examining employment outcomes for OEF/OIF veterans with mental health and substance use problems.

## **SCI QUERI's Presentations**

Many of the SCI QUERI staff will be presenting at the Congress on Spinal Cord Medicine and Rehabilitation, September 23-26, 2009 in Dallas, TX. Listed below are their presentations.

- 1 *Perceptions of Antibiotic Prescribing and Antibiotic Resistance in SCI Providers.* Moderated Poster. (Evans CT)
- 2 *Conducting Research within VA Settings.* Workshop. (Guihan M)

- 3 *Medical, Psychological and Behavioral Risk Factors of Veterans with SCI Treated for Severe Pressure Ulcers.* Oral Presentation. (Guihan M)
- 4 *The Future of Outcome Measures in SCI Research and Practice: New Measurement Initiatives* (Guihan M – Moderator)
- 5 *Enhancing Respiratory Infection Control in High Risk Health Care Settings.* Poster. (LaVela SL)
- 6 *Body Mass Index, Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury.* Moderated Poster. (Rajan S)
- 7 *Psychiatric Impairments in OEF/OIF SCI Active Duty Service Members (ADSM) in Different Military Disciplines.* Moderated Poster. (Rapacki L)
- 8 *Life Satisfaction in Veterans with SCI/D.* Oral Presentation. (Smith B)
- 9 *Psychosocial Treatments for Chronic Pain Following SCI.* Panel. (Ullrich P)
- 10 *Smoking Cessation in Veterans with SCI/D.* Oral Presentation. (Weaver F)

## CMC3 Picnic 2009

The CMC3 Annual Picnic was held on July 16, 2009 with over 100 attending. This year's theme was "its Music to my Ears," and music from the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and today was heard at lunchtime throughout the Pavilion. The games were great fun, they included a balloon and egg toss for adults and children, and a "Match the Song to the Artist Contest." The day was beautiful, and Team Brand outdid themselves grilling. This is an event that CMC3, SCI QUERI, VIREC and CSP look forward to each year.

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