Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care VA HSR&D Center of Excellence
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Center Staff Presents at Interagency TBI Conference in Washington DC

Dr. Bridget Smith presented a lecture for the screening and diagnosis symposium of OEF/OIF Veterans. Her lecture was titled, “Evaluation of TBI Screening Processes and Healthcare Utilization.” It described facility and patient characteristics associated with the completion of the mTBI screen and their association between patient characteristics and the results of the screen. Findings regarding the costs and utilization for Veterans who receive the mTBI screen were also presented as part of the HSR&D funded study.

Dr. Theresa Pape presented lectures for two different symposiums; the first symposium's subject was novel neurotherapeutic rehabilitation interventions for TBI. Her lecture titled, “Can Familiar Voices be Therapeutic during Coma Recovery?” described the double blind, randomized, clinical trial, of which Dr. Pape is the PI. The study examines the efficacy of a passive auditory sensory stimulation intervention where subjects are randomly assigned to one of two parallel groups. The experimental intervention is designed to elicit pre-injury memories of voices, people and events that are happy, sad and neutral. This intervention leverages established pre-injury synaptic connections specific to familiar people and events theorizing that reactivating a well established memory would subsequently reactivate the neuronal assemblies formed to encode these pre-injury memories.

Dr. Pape and Dr. Amy Herrold presented their lectures in a second symposium about mediators of neural repair after TBI using a multi-modal approach. Dr. Pape’s lecture was titled, “Insights into Mediators of rTMS Associated with Neurobehavioral Gains of Vegetative Patients using Multi Modal Assessments.” This lecture focused on multi-modal findings from two participants in a clinical trial examining the safety and therapeutic efficacy of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) during coma recovery.

Dr. Herrold's lecture was titled, “Substance Abuse Brain State and Overlap with TBI: Behavioral Function Outcomes and Glutamate Receptor Expression.” This presentation reported findings regarding adaptations of glutamate system receptors in rodents given methamphetamine. She was able to compare her results to that of rodent models with traumatic brain injury. This work has implications for an overlapping mechanism of neurotoxicity following methamphetamine administration and traumatic brain injury.

Two posters were also presented by CMC3 staff. The first poster authored by Dr. Amy Herrold was titled, “Effects of Alcohol Use on Patient Outcomes in Veterans with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and/or
Behavioral Health Symptoms.” Dr. Herrold’s findings indicate that approximately half of OEF/OIF Veterans screen positive for potentially hazardous alcohol use, or dependence in a self-report survey. Individuals identified as potentially hazardous drinkers endorse fewer symptoms of depression and sleep disturbances.

These individuals also report lower overall impairment/disability. These results indicate that there is a high prevalence of potentially hazardous alcohol use in Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and these individuals may be using alcohol as a coping mechanism or discounting their symptoms of depression as well as other factors that negatively impact their quality of life.

The second poster was authored by Brian D. Sindelar, 2LT USAR MD candidate ‘12, from Dr. Pape’s lab. His poster was titled, “Neurobehavioral Improvement in Severe TBI Patients who present with a Positive or Negative Blood Alcohol level on Hospital Admission.” His findings indicated that patients with positive, compared to patients with negative blood alcohol levels at injury, had greater neurobehavioral gains during coma recovery and earlier times to consciousness. The two groups had, however, similar functional scores one year after injury. These findings suggest that alcohol may play a neuro protective role in TBI.

CMC3 was well represented at this conference that focused on bringing together researchers, clinicians, the military, and students to discuss current research findings in the field of TBI.

**New PhD Post-Doc Fellow: Sara Locatelli**
Dr. Sara Locatelli received her PhD in Social Psychology from Loyola University Chicago in 2011, conducting her dissertation research on media effects and decision-making. At Loyola, she served as Research and Teaching Assistant (2004-2006), Graduate Scholar in Feminist Studies (2005-2006), and a PreDoctoral Teaching Scholar (2009-2010). She has taught courses in Learning and Behavior, Psychology and Law, Research Methods, and Statistics; she received her department’s Johnson Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Graduate Student in 2010. She has also conducted program evaluation research in cooperation with Chicago Public Schools, as well as independent research on the effect of the media on health outcomes and academic performance. She received a Student Research Award from the Association for Psychological Science in 2010 for a meta-analysis on the effect of media information on jury decision making.

Dr. Locatelli is a new PhD Post-doctoral fellow at CMC3. Her mentors are Drs. Ben Gerber, Sherri LaVela, and Fran Weaver, who she is working with to plan additional studies of MOVE! She has been involved with research on weight management, infection control practices during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, telephone access to care, and use of personal health records. She conducted interviews with program coordinators of the VA weight management program, MOVE!, to explore how program characteristics relate to patient retention, and is lead author on a manuscript of these results. She plans to continue studying weight management, including using weight management in the treatment of other conditions, and using personal health records to support self-management of weight.
New RN Post-Doc Fellow: Daisy Sherry

Daisy Sherry CNP, PhD, is a new postdoctoral nursing fellow at the Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care. Her mentors are Drs. Eileen Collins, Robert Dieter, and Meg Gulanick (Loyola University Chicago).

Dr. Sherry’s research focuses on physical activity (PA) in persons with heart failure (HF). Her dissertation involved daily PA in HF patients implanted with cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT) using the Chronic Heart Failure Questionnaire, Daily Activity Questionnaire in Heart Failure, six-minute walk test (6MWT), and device-based Activity Log Index. Dr. Sherry found that low-levels of daily PA and 6MWT distance increased at three months after CRT. During her fellowship, Dr. Sherry will examine the daily PA of CRT patients in the Veteran population to develop an appropriate activity prescription and intervention for this special group.

Dr. Sherry is an Assistant Professor at Lewis University’s College of Nursing and Health Professions (Romeoville, Illinois). She teaches in the graduate program, specializing in the Nurse Practitioner track, and is assisting in the development of a new Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program. Her clinical background is in cardiology and critical care having practiced as a registered nurse for 15 years including her role as a nurse practitioner for the last 10 years.

Dr. Sherry earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Science in Nursing, Post-Master’s Certificate in Nursing Education, and Doctorate of Philosophy in Nursing at University of Illinois-Chicago. She is certified as an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

Charlesnika Evans, PhD, MPH, Invited to Join JSCM Editorial Board

Dr. Charlesnika Evans is a Research Health Scientist with CMC3 and the Spinal Cord Injury Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (SCI QUERI). She is also a Research Assistant Professor at the Institute for Healthcare Studies in the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University. She has a bachelor’s degree in microbiology, a master’s in public health, and a doctoral degree in epidemiology. Her expertise and research interests include epidemiologic methods and health outcomes, particularly in infectious diseases.

She has received funding through HSR&D to conduct the study, ‘C. Difficile outcomes and effectiveness of treatment strategies in SCI.’ The objectives of this project are to describe the epidemiology of Clostridium difficile infection in persons with SCI and assess the comparative effectiveness of treatment strategies.

Dr. Evans was recently invited to become a member of the Editorial Board for the Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine, the peer-reviewed official journal of the Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals and the American Spinal Injury Association. JSCM is a major medical journal for SCI medicine.

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 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.

**Michael Fischer, MD Invited to Serve on NQF Renal Steering Committee**

Dr. Michael Fischer is a Staff Physician at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center and a research health scientist at the Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care (CMC3). He is also an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Section of Nephrology at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). He completed both his fellowship in Nephrology and his Master of Science in Public Health at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. He is a graduate of Indiana University School of Medicine and completed his residency in Internal Medicine at Washington University and the Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Fischer was awarded a Career Development Award in 2007 by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research and Development Service, entitled, *The Role of Chronic Kidney Disease in an Elderly High-Risk Population*. With the support and guidance of his mentors, Drs. Denise Hynes (CMC3 and VIReC) and James Lash (UIC), Dr. Fischer is assessing adherence to guideline treatment measures and evaluating health care utilization and outcomes among elderly Veterans with chronic kidney disease.

Dr. Fischer has been invited to serve on the National Quality Forum’s Renal Endorsement Maintenance Steering Committee. The National Quality Forum (NQF) is a not-for-profit organization whose goals are to develop and implement a national strategy for health care quality measurement and reporting, and to improve the quality of American healthcare. Through this committee, the NQF seeks to identify and endorse measures for public reporting and quality improvement that specifically address chronic kidney disease (CKD), end-stage kidney disease (ESKD), and other important renal-related conditions. Dr. Fischer’s participation on this NKF committee complements his ongoing efforts in VA as a member of the VA CKD Performance Measures Working Group and his research program at CMC3.

**CMC3 Activities**

**Center Activities**

- CMC3 would like to announce that Dr. Howard Gordon, a Senior Staff member of CMC3 has accepted the appointment of Assistant Director of CMC3 at JBVA.
- CMC3 Newsbrief goes green

**Post Doc Activities**

- Dr. Erica Bauer: received this year’s AcademyHealth/Aetna Minority Scholarship.
- Dr. Shanti Ganesh: Passed her oral boards and is now fully board certified in PM&R.
- Dr. Amy Herrold: Recently presented work at the Interagency TBI Conference in DC.
- Dr. Carol Kostovich: Was recently elected a Fellow in the Institute of Medicine Chicago (June 2011). She also gave an invited presentation for Hines VAH Nurses Week in May.
SCI QUERI Activities

- SCI QUERI Investigators to present at upcoming International Conference on Communication in Healthcare in Chicago, IL and Summit 2011 + EXPO: Delivering Excellence, Achieving State-of-the-Art Health Care, hosted by Paralyzed Veterans of America in Orlando, FL.

**CMC3 Picnic- “A Day at the Movies” a Huge Success**

What do you do on a rainy day? Go to the movies! The “CMC3, A Day at the Movies Picnic” was held on July 28, 2011 reflecting the Hollywood theme at the Pavilion on the Hines VA Hospital campus. The red carpet was rolled out for 113 stars in attendance. Team Brand grilled meats and vegetables that could have won an Academy Award and staff outdid themselves in the side dish and dessert categories. The games included the department favorites, “paparazzi balloon toss” and “movie critics egg toss”, with prizes including movie gift cards and movie sized boxes of candy. 13 Starlets (children) were among those who attended this year. Their games were especially challenging and fun to watch. In addition, this year CSP challenged HSR&D to a star studded volleyball match in the sand court. Unfortunately, the sand was soggy, better for building sand castles than playing volley ball. The challenge will stand until 2012 at CMC3’s picnic. Despite the weather, Hooray for Hollywood, everyone had a great time.

**Recent Publications**


**Gordon HS, Gerber BS**. *What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.* J Gen Intern Med. 2011 Feb;26(2):104-6.


Humensky JL. *Are adolescents with high socioeconomic status more likely to engage in alcohol and illicit drug use in early adulthood?* Subst Abuse Treat Prev Policy. 2010 Aug 5;5:19.


