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AA GRECC Newsletter

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System



Summer 2007

Welcome to the first issue of the Ann Arbor GRECC E-Newsletter!

Table of Contents

- [Ann Arbor GRECC Faculty and Staff Listing](#)
- [Faculty Highlights](#)
- [Clinical News](#)
- [Education News](#)
- [Research News](#)
- [Other News and Events](#)
- [Notable Awards and Commendations](#)
- [Selected Upcoming Conferences in 2007](#)

[Message from the Director](#)

[GRECC Home](#)

Message from the Director

Greetings from the Ann Arbor GRECC Director! A number of us are finally official, and no longer “acting”, including myself. I am excited that we have this opportunity to publicize all of the changes at the GRECC. While we have had a number of departures, we have been reenergized by a whole new cadre of GRECC scientists allowing us to explore new initiatives in palliative care, physical activity in osteoarthritis, and mechanisms underlying injuries to the basal ganglia, spinal cord and nerve roots. We have added two PhD’s, one an occupational therapist research scientist, and the other a neuropsychologist Special Fellow in Academic Geriatrics. Our own Lona Mody has been appointed Associate Director for Clinical and plans are in place for recruiting a Program Analyst to assist in Clinical Demonstration Projects. This newsletter will cover a number of important areas, giving updates on our Core (Research, Clinical, and Educational) activities, faculty accolades, and an overview of our research funding and publications. – *Neil Alexander.*



Ann Arbor GRECC Faculty and Staff Listing

GRECC Office

Neil Alexander (Director)
 Tom Fitzgerald (Associate Director, Education)
 Raymond Yung (Associate Director, Research)
 Lona Mody (Associate Director, Clinical)
 Timothy Dolen (Administrative Officer)
 Program Staff: Bonnie Shay
 Office staff: Sherry Matthews; Billie Whittaker

[Back to Top](#)

GRECC Faculty

Roger Albin (Chief, Neuroscience Research Program)
Neil Alexander
Caroline Blaum
Nicolas Bohnen
Susanne Bradley
Christine Cigolle
John Fink
Tom Fitzgerald
Brant Fries (Chief, Health Systems Research Program)
Karen Hall
Daniel Hinshaw
Robert Hogikyan
Preeti Malani
Marina Mata
Richard Miller
Lona Mody
Marcos Montagnini
Susan Murphy
Joseph Nnodim
R. Scott Turner
Jocelyn Wiggins
Raymond Yung

[Back to Top](#)

Faculty Highlights

One notable faculty will be highlighted in each issue of the GRECC Newsletter.

Brant E. Fries, Ph.D.



Dr. Fries has been associated with the Department of Veterans Affairs since 1975, when he began a project to computerize the pharmacy of the Veterans Hospital in West Haven Connecticut. Since then, he has worked on projects to profile VA nursing homes, to implement the nursing home Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) and home care assessment (RAI-HC) in the national VA system, and to develop a case-mix system for VA psychiatric patients. He currently serves as the Chief of Health Systems Research at the Ann Arbor GRECC. Additionally, Dr. Fries is a Professor of Health Management and Policy and Research Professor in the Institute of Gerontology, School of Medicine at the University of Michigan. Dr. Fries' research efforts have been both to develop methodology and to apply it to the field of long-term care. The methods he develops help us understand the delivery of long-term care, with the multiple purposes of assuring quality, designing effective payment systems and regulation, improving operational efficiency, and enabling effective financing and policy decisions. Together they have significantly changed long-term care practice and regulation in the VA, US and abroad.

Dr. Fries is the originator of the Resource Utilization Groups (RUG), an intensity-measurement (case-mix) system for nursing home residents. RUG-III is used by the national Medicare program's Prospective Payment System and the Medicaid programs in over twenty states to pay for nursing home care. Currently, he is leading

the analysis to refine RUG-II in a \$6 million national study. Dr. Fries also founded and serves as the President of interRAI, a consortium of 47 researchers from 26 nations, dedicated to using resident assessment and case mix to compare and improve care of elderly persons in institutional and non-institutional settings. The nursing home RAI has been translated into over two dozen languages and adopted as the national instrument for used in all US nursing homes (including the VA), Iceland and by most Canadian provinces. interRAI has developed multiple assessment instruments, compatible with the RAI, to perform comprehensive assessment and set care standards in home care, palliative care, post-acute care, acute care, and assisted living. The home care instrument has been adopted by thirteen US states and several Canadian provinces and has been recommended as the national reporting standard by the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Dr. Fries also participated in the development and use of the RAI-Mental Health, for inpatients in psychiatric hospitals, and is working with the State of Illinois to use the RAI-MH for nursing homes serving primarily residents with persistent and severe mental illness. The interRAI assessment systems move towards developing a common, international language for long-term care.

[Back to Top](#)

GRECC Clinical News

Dr. Robert Hogikyan, a long time member of the GRECC, has been appointed Chief of the section of Geriatrics at the Ann Arbor VA Healthcare System, adding to his role as the Director of the Geriatrics Extended Care Service, and as the Geriatric Medicine Fellowship Director at the University of Michigan. This new appointment is further acknowledgement of Robert's tireless dedication to improve GRECC-related clinical programs.

The Clinical Demonstration Project "Frailty Delirium System-wide Prevention Program (FDSI)," spear-headed by GRECC affiliate and geropsychiatrist Barbara Kamholz and Neil Alexander, is designed to identify frail and delirious patients at an early time in their hospitalization, in order to deliver an intervention to prevent delirium and to improve overall outcomes. The project recently received VISN funding to revise the assessment and treatment algorithms and better track outcomes. We anticipate that the results may have broad clinical application and are potentially exportable to the other VA hospital sites.

Dr. Brant Fries is currently leading a number of initiatives to investigate the use of assessment instruments developed by interRAI to be used in the hospital, home, and palliative care settings. Discussion is underway to apply the home care assessment tool to the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program, lead by Robert Hogikyan and Marcos Montagnini. Additional discussions are underway to apply the hospital (acute care) assessment tool as well as the palliative care tool.

The Geriatrics Extended Care Unit at the Ann Arbor VA Hospital is currently renovating 6 new rooms designated for palliative care patients. These state-of-the-art rooms are planned to include a number of patient- and their family-friendly features.

[Back to Top](#)

GRECC Education News

The Ann Arbor GRECC continues to play a major role in the education arena, both at the local and national level. For example, through the "Evaluation of Diabetes Self-Management Consultant Care" project, our Center has developed and is currently implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of a collaborative care intervention to improve blood glucose control and diabetes-related quality of life for subjects with type 2 diabetes. Currently operating in two different health care systems, this program is also being extended to include other GRECCs. Other ongoing projects include 'Diabetes Perceptions, Patient Satisfaction and Self-Care,' 'Comprehensive Programs to Strengthen Physicians' Education in Geriatrics,' 'Geriatric Education in VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics' and 'Long-term Care Referral Tutorial.'

The Ann Arbor GRECC is also partnering with the Michigan Geriatric Education Center in East Lansing to help train CBOC personnel on the functional assessment of the older adult, with funding from VISN 11. A similar pilot project in both VISN 11 and VISN 10- training CBOC personnel on functional assessment of the older adult- was a collaborative effort among the Ann Arbor GRECC, the Michigan Geriatric Education Center, the Case Western Geriatric Education Center and the Cleveland GRECC. The project is completed and data is being analyzed.

The GRECC-sponsored October 2006 Symposium, entitled “Critical Clinical Issues in the Care of the Older Adult: Dementia,” was held at the Towsley Center at the University of Michigan. The program was a tremendous success, with over 250 attendees. We want to particularly thank Scott Turner, Chief of the Neurology Service at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare Center and GRECC investigator, for chairing the education conference. This year’s conference, “Critical Clinical Issues in the Older Adult: Measuring Clinical Quality in older Adults – Potential, Pitfalls and Pay for Performance,” will be held on September 27-28, 2007. The course director is Dr. Caroline Blaum. For more information on the conference, contact Bonnie Shay by phone (734-761-7686) or e-mail (bshay@umich.edu).

[Back to Top](#)

GRECC Research News

The AA GRECC investigators continue to be major contributors of important research activities, with total grant support in 2006 totaling more than \$5.4 million dollars.



New research grants awarded in 2006 (Principal and Co-investigator)

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Time study project data collection and analysis (Fries)

High Q Foundation

Evaluating NR2B Antagonists in R6/2 Mice (Albin)

National Institute of Health

Evaluating striatal function in a murine Huntington’s disease model (Albin)

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ) in Huntington’s disease (Albin)

Oculomotor bradykinesia, visuospatial attention, dopamine and the risk of falling in the elderly (Bohnen)

Hemophilus influenzae genes associated with COPD (Bradley)

Relationship of frailty to multimorbidity and disability (Cigolle)

Hereditary spastic paraplegia (Fink)

Michigan Master Data Set (Fries)

Social research training on applied issues of aging (Fries)

Model systems for development of pain gene therapy (Mata)

Gene expression and biomarkers in dwarf mice (Miller)

Activation defects in T cells of aged mice (Miller)

Alzheimer’s disease cooperative study (Turner)

Environmental effects on lupus T cell DNA methylation and gene expression (Yung)

Molecular regulation of CC chemokine receptors in atherosclerosis (Yung)

Spastic Paraplegia Foundation

Developing treatment for SPG3A hereditary spastic paraplegia (Fink)

State of Illinois

Illinois psychiatric nursing home study (Fries)

State of Michigan

University of Michigan MICIS Data Archive (Fries)

MDCH Home care assessment project and quality indicators project (Fries)

University of Michigan

Dynamical analysis of EEG and biomarkers of dementia (Turner)

University of Michigan: Functional screening of small molecules for inhibiting the ion channel activity of β -amyloid peptides (Turner)

[Back to Top](#)

Currently Funded VA Merit Review Grants

- Functional circuit training in older adults with congestive heart failure (Alexander)
- Aerobic performance, mobility limitations and exercise in older adults with diabetes (Blaum, Alexander)
- Striatal and extra-striatal mechanisms of falling in PD (Bohnen)
- Trial of varicella vaccine for the prevention of herpes zoster and its complications (Bradley)
- Novel cause of motor neuron disease (Fink)
- Hereditary spastic paraplegia (Fink)
- Gene transfer of truncated NOGO receptor for spinal cord regeneration (Mata)
- Gene transfer for spinal cord trauma (Mata)
- A randomized, multicenter, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of DL- α -tocopherol and memantine for the treatment of functional decline in outpatients with Alzheimer's disease on Donepezil (Turner)
- Regulation of T cell chemokine receptor expression in aging (Yung)



[Back to Top](#)

Other News and Events

“Coming and Going”:

Welcome:

- Lona Mody. A special welcome to Lona who has recently been officially confirmed as Associate Director Clinical at our GRECC. Lona completed her Internal Medicine Residency at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and a Geriatric Medicine Fellowship at the University of Michigan in 1997. She is currently appointed as an Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan. Now in the last two years of her NIA K23 award, her research interests include infections and antimicrobial resistance in long-term care, pneumonia in older adults, and quality of care in nursing homes.
- Marcos Montagnini. Marcos is our newest GRECC faculty. Dr. Montagnini completed his Geriatric Medicine Fellowship at the University of Michigan in 1997 and was an Associate Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Wisconsin prior to his move back to Ann Arbor in March 2007. Marcos will be leading the Home Based Primary Care Program, expanding the palliative care service at the Ann Arbor VA Healthcare System, and develop a palliative care fellowship program.
- Marina Mata. Marina graduated from the University of Barcelona, followed by a neurology residency at

the University of Michigan. She is appointed as a Professor in the Department of Neurology at the University of Michigan. Her Merit Review and NIH-sponsored research program is directed at understanding the pathogenesis of injury and degeneration in the nervous system, and developing novel therapeutic approaches using viral vector-mediated gene transfer. The conditions under investigation include Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, and nerve root injury and regeneration.

- Susan Murphy. Susan is an occupational therapist and a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan. She is funded by an NIH KO1 and the American College of Rheumatology to assess physical activity, pain and fatigue, and to develop behavioral interventions to enhance function in older adults with knee and/or hip osteoarthritis.
- Sara Wright. Sara has recently joined the Ann Arbor GRECC as a trainee in the VA Special Fellowship Program in Academic Geriatrics (SFPAG). Dr. Wright is a Ph.D. neuropsychologist who has been studying the effect of cortisol in older adult cognition as well as the impact of cognition on mobility difficulties.

Departure:

- We wish James Russell the best as he leaves Ann Arbor to head the Neuromuscular Division at the University of Maryland.

[Back to Top](#)

Other News

- We want to extend a special welcome to Ms. LouAnn Atkins, the new Director of the AAVAHS. Ms. Atkins came to us from Texas, where she was the Director of the Big Spring VA Hospital.
- The GRECC has officially turned 'PCed'! We hope that the new desktop computers will allow us to better integrate with the larger VA and University of Michigan community.
- Drs. Neil Alexander and Raymond Yung have transitioned from their interim positions to become the Director and Associate Director of Research of the Ann Arbor GRECC respectively.

[Back to Top](#)

Notable Awards and Commendations

- Dr. Jeffrey Halter, Chief of the Division of Geriatrics Medicine at the University of Michigan and former Ann Arbor GRECC Director, is the Senior Editor of the upcoming 6th Hazzard's Principles of Geriatric Medicine & Gerontology.
- Congratulations to Dr. Carolyn Blaum who was recently appointed as the Associate Chief of Clinical Services in the Division of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Michigan.
- Kudos to Dr. Susan Bradley in her new role as the Chief Editor of the Journal of Infection Control Hospital Epidemiology, the official journal of the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America.
- Dr. Richard Miller, a GRECC investigator, was appointed in 2006 as the Joint Editor-in-Chief of the journal Aging Cell, a premiere gerontology journal.
- Dr. Roger Albin was appointed in 2006 as the Chair of the Clinical Neuroscience and Disease Study Section at the National Institute of Health.

[Back to Top](#)

Selected Upcoming Conferences in 2007

- University of Michigan Geriatrics Center: Second Annual Aging Research Symposium. April 4, 2007. Ann Arbor, MI.
- American Academy of Neurology. April 28-May 5, 2007, Boston, MA.
- American Geriatrics Society. May 2-6, 2007, Seattle, WA. ***VA Special Interest Group Meeting**
- University of Michigan 11th Annual Nathan Shock Center Workshop: Stem Cells & Aging: Balancing Regeneration and Cancer. May 15-16, 2007, Ann Arbor, MI.
- University of Michigan Older Americans Independence Center: Genetics and Genomics Strategies in Aging Research. May 31-June 1, 2007, Ann Arbor, MI.
- American Aging Association. June 1-4, 2007, San Antonio, TX.
- American Diabetes Association. June 22-26, 2007. Chicago, IL.
- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences: Biology of Aging. September 16-20, 2007. Sweden.
- Gordon Research Conference: Biology of Aging. September 23-28, 2007, Les Diablerets, Switzerland.
- Ann Arbor GRECC Symposium: Critical Clinical Issues in the Older Adult: Measuring Clinical Quality in older Adults – Potential, Pitfalls and Pay for Performance. September 27-28, 2007.
- American Neurological Association. October 7-10, 2007, Washington, D.C.
- American Heart Association. November 4-7, 2007. Orlando, FL.
- American College of Rheumatology. November 6-11, 2007, Boston, MA.
- Gerontological Society of America. November 16-20, 2007, San Francisco, CA. ***GRECC symposium at the meeting: "Innovations in Palliative and End-of-Life Care," "Swallowing and Dysphagia in the Elderly," and "E-Learning in Geriatrics."**

[Back to Top](#)

Disclaimer: This above list is meant to serve as a resource and does not constitute endorsement of any organization or program.

We welcome any suggestion for content to be included in the future issues of the Ann Arbor GRECC Newsletter. Please contact Dr. Raymond Yung (e-mail: ryung@umich.edu) for any suggestion.