



South Central MIRECC Communiqué

A publication of the Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center

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“Closing the efficacy-effectiveness gap”

In the Aftermath of Hurricanes

Greer Sullivan, MD, MSPH, Director, South Central MIRECC

After two hurricanes and several weeks of chaos (how long *has* it been???) things are beginning to settle down in our VISN and within the South Central MIRECC. We have located all of the New Orleans-based MIRECC personnel who evacuated for Hurricane Katrina and, for the most part, they are settled in new locations, mostly within our Network. Our MIRECC colleagues in Houston, including some who had already relocated there from New Orleans, have endured the ordeal of evacuation and are now fortunately back in Houston. Displaced MIRECC personnel have been warmly welcomed by many VA facilities, including facilities in Houston, Jackson, Little Rock, Fayetteville, Tampa, and Atlanta. We are very grateful for the tremendous support we have received from these facilities – especially from the Mental Health Service Directors and the Associate Chiefs of Staff for Research. If any of you wish to contact displaced MIRECC colleagues from New Orleans we have included in this newsletter a list of these individuals, their current locations, and contact information.

We understand that about 50 people remained in the New Orleans VA Medical Center for almost one week, until they were evacuated. These staff included Mr. John Church, Medical Center Director; Dr. Timothy Hammond, ACOS for Research; Dr. Marshall Fitz, Dr. Helena Costales, and Mary-Elise Merrill, RN, from Mental Health Service; as well as most of top management, several medical personnel, police officers, and engineers. Those remaining assisted in evacuating very ill patients from the nine-floor facility by escorting them, and in some cases carrying them, down dark stairwells. As of this writing, the basement remains flooded.

Plans are underway to create several satellite clinics for patients in the area surrounding New Orleans. Dr. Maga Jackson-Triche, Director of the Mental Health Service at the New Orleans VAMC, is leading efforts to staff these clinics to provide mental health services. Undoubtedly the demand for mental health services is going to be larger than ever.

We also understand that the Biloxi VA Medical Center, with one of the largest inpatient populations in our VISN, successfully evacuated their patients. Dr. Greg Gillette, Director of the Mental Health Service, Dr. John Liberto and other Mental Health personnel rode out the storm at the hospital, all the while providing care to veterans and members of the community. Many VA staff there lost their homes. The facility itself was not severely damaged, although the Gulfport facility was badly damaged and most of the surrounding Mississippi Gulf coast was literally swept away. I am certain everyone has had the chance to see on television the overwhelming damage to this area.

Because the New Orleans-based MIRECC personnel had no way to contact or locate each other, the MIRECC offices in Little Rock functioned as a virtual “home base.” Once we were able to contact people or they contacted us, we often heard from them daily and, in many cases, multiple times a day. We were able to assist people in reaching each other, and we listened to sometimes harrowing and often moving stories involving struggles to find shelter and subsistence and to locate family members and pets. And, of course, so many have sustained great and truly profound losses. Most still are uncertain about the

extent of their losses. Our colleagues from New Orleans and Gulfport-Biloxi will continue to need our support in the coming weeks and months. At this stage, simply listening, while it may seem like a small thing, can be a great help.

In the meanwhile, we want everyone to know that the South Central MIRECC is continuing to move forward with our work in education and research. While delayed slightly by the hurricanes, the MIRECC pilot study program and our Clinical Educators program are up again and rolling with response letters from both programs expected to be sent out very soon. Looking toward the future, we have begun planning for our 2006 retreat which will be held in Little Rock in January. Once an agenda is finalized, we will circulate it broadly, and we hope that many of you will make a special effort to attend.

In this time of crisis, the value of community – in particular, the value of the MIRECC community – becomes abundantly clear.



Contact Information for New Orleans MIRECC Personnel

Name	Location	Phone	Email
Brailey, Kevin	Houston, TX		kevin.brailey@med.va.gov
Constans, Joseph	Atlanta, GA	404.712.8441	j.constans@att.net
Eubanks-White, Darlene	Little Rock, AR	501.257.1223	darlene.eubanks-white@med.va.gov
Foundas, Anne	Houston, TX	713.791.1414 x13970 or 318.834.0564	anne.foundas@hotmail.com
Dossman-Welch, Tonya	Atlanta, GA	504.717.0071 or 770.478.3395	dossmanwelch@yahoo.com or tonya.welch@navy.mil
Gentry, Lisa	Tampa, FL	813.558.3967	gentry.lisa@gmail.com
Jackson-Triche, Maga	Jackson, MS	601.364.7212	maga.jackson-triche@med.va.gov
Kauth, Michael	Jackson, MS	601.362.4471 ext. 6191	michael.kauth@med.va.gov
Sautter, Fred	Little Rock, AR	501.257.1705	sautter.frederic@med.va.gov
Thomas, Allen	Fayetteville, AR	479.443.4301 ext. 5173	allen.thomas3@med.va.gov
Vasterling, Jennifer	Houston, TX	713.794.8668	vasterli@bcm.edu

Notes on the Disaster from the MIRECC Associate Director for Research

Jennifer Vasterling, Ph.D., Associate Director for Research
Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Houston, TX

As I drove back to Houston from New Orleans yesterday on the one-month anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, I reflected on the events of the past four weeks. I feel in many ways to have been personally lucky, but I have also felt fortunate as a VA employee. Although landmark events such as hurricanes lead to a wide range of emotional reactions, as a VA employee and MIRECC researcher, two reactions have stood out: gratitude and hope.

There is much to be grateful for as a VA employee. The VA response at national, network, and local levels has been extraordinary. Through temporary work details and travel orders, displaced VA employees have regained some sense of normalcy by being allowed to work and continue to serve the VA mission. The outpouring of support and offers of assistance from fellow VA employees and Centers from around the country, as well as from VA Office of Research & Development and other VA Central Office units, has been incredible and a source of great comfort. In the previous newsletter, Dr. Michael Kauth spoke of the local support he has received at the Jackson VA. My experience at the Michael E. DeBakey VA in Houston has been quite similar, with exceptional support in particular from the Research Service, Mental Health Service, and local MIRECC offices. I have no doubt that MIRECC staff at other locations have had similar experiences.

There is also hope. The SC MIRECC has always been a virtual center because of our geographic distribution within the network. Now, we have temporarily re-organized ourselves geographically, and our work as a center has continued to thrive. Our new assignments have facilitated new professional relationships and new collaborations. We have been able to find new opportunities in the face of adversity. We also can see VA looking toward the future – perhaps a VA that builds upon the past to create an even brighter future for veteran health care, education, and medical research in affected areas.

What can we expect within SC MIRECC Research Core for the future? The SC MIRECC Research Core will continue all of its programs – those dedicated to research training, pilot awards, and consultation services. However, a certain amount of patience will be required due to disruptions inherent to the displacement of some of our personnel. Many significant challenges are facing our displaced researchers; but, I am confident that through the support of the broader SC MIRECC community, our virtual center will continue to grow and thrive.



Employee Assistance Program

Employees who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina and want counseling, are urged to contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Coordinator at one of the following VA facilities—

Alexandria VA Medical Center

Tina Eyre, LCSW
318.473.0010, Ext. 2857

Fayetteville VA Medical Center

Shirley Thurston, LCSW
479.444.5065

VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System

Gus Sison, PhD
228.563.2821 (Office)
228.806.9643 (Cell)
228.850.8431 (Pager)

Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

Audrey Dawkins-Oliver, LCSW
713.791.1414, Ext. 6881

(continued on page 4)

EAP contact information

(continued from page 3)

G.V. Sonny Montgomery VA Medical Center

Linda Gladney, LCSW
601.362.4471, Ext. 1485

Oklahoma City VA Medical Center

Richard A. Carothers, PhD
405.270.5168

Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

Craig Provost, PhD
501.257.6599

Overton Brooks VA Medical Center

Shirley Shipley, LCSW
318.221.8411, Ext. 6518

Muskogee VA Medical Center

Juli McNeil, LCSW, MSW
918.680.3699



Mobile Clinics Established

Mobile outpatient clinics are now open in south Mississippi and Louisiana to provide medical treatment to veterans displaced by the hurricane. The mobile clinics are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM and Saturday from 8:00 AM to noon.

McComb, MS

Mississippi National Guard Armory
319 West Avenue North
McComb, MS 39648

Hammond, LA

1135 S. Morrison Avenue
Hammond, La 704033

LaPlace, LA

Wal-Mart parking lot during day only
1616 W. Airline Hwy
LaPlace, LA
Walmart pharmacy hours
Monday-Friday: 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Saturday: 9:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Slidell, LA

Sam Club parking lot during day only
39142 Natchez Drive
Slidell, LA 70461
Walmart pharmacy Hours
Monday-Friday: 8:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Saturday: 9:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Gulfport, MS

Sam's Club Parking Lot
15065 Cresote Road
Gulfport, MS 39505

For more information about the mobile clinics, call 1-800-949-1009 ext. 6004. Veterans currently enrolled in a standing VA clinic that is operational should continue to seek treatment at that clinic.

South Central VA Health Care Network Research Grants Program Call for Proposals

The South Central VA Health Care Network (SCVAHCN) is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for two different research grant awards:

- **South Central Research Career Development Grant** – up to \$80,000 per year for up to three year's funding, intended for new research investigators with no prior funding history.
- **Pilot Project Grant** – up to \$50,000 per year for up to two year's funding, intended for junior researchers to collect pilot data.

The purpose of this program is to promote research in the South Central Network through the development of promising junior investigators who have demonstrated their commitment to a research career. This program is not intended for independent, established investigators. Applicants for a SCVAHCN Research Grant award must hold a 5/8s VA appointment at an SCVAHCN facility, possess a doctoral degree (e.g., MD, PhD, PharmD), and hold a university faculty appointment. All research disciplines and areas of expertise (basic sciences, clinical and health services) are welcome to apply.

Applications are available through Research Service and from Ms. Kim Heine at the address and number below. Applications are due December 16, 2005. Grant applications should be submitted electronically to Ms. Heine via email at KTheine@uams.edu.

For questions about the application and review process, please call Ms. Heine at (501) 257-1105. For questions about research design, please call your local ACOS for Research or Dr. Greer Sullivan at (501) 257-1971.

Conference Announcement

Psychopharmacology Update 2005
October 14-15, 2005
The Houstonian Hotel
111 North Post Oak Lane, Houston, Texas

The Baylor College of Medicine has schedule the *Psychopharmacology Update 2005* for October 14-15 at the Houstonian Hotel. This program is co-sponsored by the South Central MIRECC. (See attached agenda). This program was developed to provide practical tips on advances in the use of psychotropic medication for practicing clinicians. The update will focus on developments in the past year that are relevant to clinicians who treat psychiatric disorders, to include complicated depression, bipolar disorder, and the use of medication in the medically ill or pregnant patient.

The Psychopharmacology Update has been a popular meeting. You may register online at <http://cme.bcm.tmc.edu/1321> or call Baylor College of Medicine, Office of Continuing Medical Education at 713.798.8237. **South Central MIRECC Affiliates can have their registration fees covered by the MIRECC. Indicate on the form that you are a MIRECC Affiliate.** If you are uncertain of your MIRECC affiliation, contact Ms. Kim Heine at Kim.heine2@med.va.gov

To reserve a hotel room at the Houstonian Hotel, call 800.231.2759.

For more information, go to the web site above or email the Office of Continuing Medical Education at cme@bcm.tmc.edu

New Education Product CRAFT Manuals Are Now Available

Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) manuals are ready for distribution. Steven Scruggs, Ph.D., of the Oklahoma City VAMC, worked with Robert Meyers, Ph.D., of the University of Mexico, Albuquerque, and former postdoctoral fellow Rebecca Kayo, Ph.D., to develop a new application of Dr. Meyers' work with concerned significant others (CSO – family members and close friends) of people with substance abuse problems. They developed a manual for use with CSOs in a psychoeducational format, teaching them a skills based, positive approach to dealing with their substance abusing loved one.

If you would like to receive a copy of the manual, please provide your mailing address to Allen Thomas, Ph.D., at allen.thomas3@med.va.gov



October Conference Calls 1-800-767-1750

- 3—Schizophrenia Team, 3:00 PM CT, access code 20061#
- 3—Education Core, 2:00 PM CT, *cancelled*
- 11—Directors Call, 3:00 PM CT, access code 19356#
- 12—Neuroimaging Group, 9:00 AM CT, access code 24394#
- 17—Disorder Team Leaders, 2:00 PM CT, access code 20143#
- 18—Substance Abuse Team, General, 1:00 PM CT, access code 23400#
- 19—Program Assistants, 2:00 PM CT, access code 43593#
- 24—PRECEP Call, 11:00 AM CT, access code 39004#
- 25—Directors Call, 3:00 PM CT, access code 19356#
- 28—Psychosocial Rehabilitation Trainers, noon CT, access code 85388#

The next issue of the *South Central MIRECC Communiqué* will be published November 1, 2005. Deadline for submission of items to the November newsletter is October 25. Urgent items may be submitted for publication in the *Communiqué Newsflash* at any time. Email items to the Editor, Michael R. Kauth, Ph.D., at Michael.Kauth@med.va.gov or FAX to (601) 364-1395.

South Central MIRECC Internet site: www.va.gov/scmirecc/

SC MIRECC intranet site: yaww.visn16.med.va.gov/mirecc.htm

National MIRECC Internet site: www.mirecc.med.va.gov