



South Central MIRECC Communiqué

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“Closing the efficacy-effectiveness gap”

Hurricane Katrina Displaces New Orleans VA and the MIRECC Office

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G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery VA Medical Center, Jackson, MS

I am writing this article more than two weeks after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf coast. But, the crisis is not over. The enormity of the destruction to property and lives is only just being realized. VA staff at the New Orleans, Gulfport, and Biloxi facilities are displaced – all of us having lost our communities and many of us having lost our houses. We are separated from friends and colleagues and all the daily familiar activities and routines that provide us a feeling of comfort and security.

I was returning from vacation on August 28 when I learned that Hurricane Katrina was bearing down on New Orleans and would hit in less than 24 hours. The city was already evacuating! I only had time to get to the house and collect a few important papers and two changes of clothes before leaving for a 10 ½ hour crawl to Jackson, MS. At times, the hurricane was moving faster than the cars on the highway!

At present, I am staying with a good friend and working at the Jackson VA. I do not know the condition of my house, but I think it’s still there. The rest of the New Orleans MIRECC personnel are scattered in Houston, Little Rock, Fayetteville, Atlanta, and Tampa. Most are also unsure of the damage to their homes. We are all looking forward to being together again and back in our city. We have no idea how long we will be displaced or how the city will change as a consequence of this disaster. It is very clear that the Gulf coast, which took the brunt of the hurricane, will not be the same.

Although the New Orleans MIRECC office is now completely virtual, the South Central MIRECC is still functioning! In fact, the Little Rock office was the primary point of contact for us as we tried to reconnect. New contact information for displaced New Orleans MIRECC staff is listed in this issue.

I want to tell you all that I am very grateful for two things. First, I am grateful to work for the VA and for the MIRECC. As you know, the VA continued to pay employees who were forced to leave New Orleans and the Gulf coast. Unlike many others, we VA employees could be confident of a paycheck and our jobs. Working for the MIRECC, I have the ability to move my job to another location. Second, I am grateful for family and friends who have checked on me and offered assistance. Once people could get through, I was overwhelmed by worried telephone calls, text messages, and emails from friends trying to check on me. Many of those messages were from VA friends and colleagues, and I was reminded how connected we all are in the VA – that we are a VA family! As I noted, we first reestablished contact through the Little Rock MIRECC office; our own MIRECC family has been so helpful in checking on us, communicating, and getting us settled into new locations. Here at the Jackson VA, I have been made very welcome and have appreciated the staff who have stopped to chat and offer assistance. My fellow MIRECC colleagues are getting equally warm receptions at the VAs where they have relocated.

In closing, I want to thank the VISN 16 Network Office for quickly responding to this disaster. I want to thank the VISN 16 VA Medical Centers for accepting evacuated patients and displaced VA staff,

particularly the Jackson VA Medical Center. I want to thank the New Orleans, Gulfport and Biloxi VA staff who stayed behind during the worst of the disaster to care for veterans who were too ill to be moved. Lastly, I want to thank the city and state police, firefighters, emergency personnel, utilities service personnel, and National Guard for their tireless efforts to rescue victims and bring order to chaos.

New Contact Information for New Orleans MIRECC Personnel

Name	Location	Phone	Email
Constans, Joseph	Atlanta, GA	504.232.2703 or 404.712.8441	j.constans@att.net or m.constans@att.net
Eubanks-White, Darlene	Atlanta, GA	404.363.1646	eubankswhite@yahoo.com
Foundas, Anne	Houston, TX	713-791-1414 x13970 or 318-834-0564	
Dossman-Welch, Tonya	Atlanta, GA	504.717.0071 or 770.478.3395	dossmanwelch@aol.com
Gentry, Lisa	Tampa, FL	352.359.1500	elisagentry@yahoo.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	504.813.4982 or 501-228-6075	
Thomas, Allen	Fayetteville, AR	479.443.4301 ext. 5173	abthomas35@aol.com
Vasterling, Jennifer, & Brailey, Kevin	Houston, TX	713-794-8668 or 504- 236-0813	Jvasterling1@hotmail.com



Web Presentation about a Web-Based Tool to Screen Pain Management Referrals

The MIRECC *Bringing Science to Practice* web-based conference series presents **Jeff A. West, Ph.D.**, on the “**Development and Use of a Web-based Education/Screening Tool for Pain Management,**” **September 15, noon to 1:00 PM CT.** Dr. West serves as Director of the Behavioral Medicine Unit within the Mental Health Service Line at the VA Medical Center, New Orleans, where he has functioned as a Staff Clinical Psychologist for 18 years. He has published in the area of pain perception and psychiatric disorders, established the Behavioral Pain Management Program within Mental Health, and his involvements during a majority of working days include veterans coping with chronic pain disorders. He was a founding member of the VISN 16 MIRECC and additionally holds an appointment within the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology, Tulane University Medical Center.

The PowerPoint slides for Dr. West’s presentation can be downloaded from a VA-networked computer at <http://vaww.visn16.med.va.gov/mirecc.htm> beginning September 14. The live audioconference can be accessed September 15 at **1-800-767-1750, access code 45566#**. This presentation is accredited for 1.0 hour of discipline-specific continuing education by the VA Employee Education System.

****New Clinical Education Product****

Community Reinforcement and Family Training – Support and Prevention Manual

Steve Scruggs, Ph.D., of the Oklahoma City VAMC worked with nationally known researcher Robert Meyers, Ph.D., of the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and former postdoctoral fellow Rebecca Kayo, Ph.D., to develop a new application of Dr Meyers’ work with concerned significant others (CSOs – 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. This approach gives CSOs alternatives to nagging, pleading, and threatening, which have little impact on substance use behavior. Previous studies have shown the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) to result in close to 70% of treatment resistance substance abusers deciding to come to treatment. Further, CSOs have shown significant reductions in depression and family conflict. The current CRAFT-Support and Prevention (CRAFT-SP) manual received strong patient satisfaction results during two pilot groups at the Oklahoma City VA, and is now available to other VA programs. The next step is to develop an outcome study for CRAFT-SP.

This project was funded by a South Central MIRECC Clinical Education Grant. Due to Hurricane Katrina, manuals are presently not available for distribution. If you would like to receive a free copy of the manual, please contact Allen Thomas, Ph.D., at allen.thomas3@med.va.gov and a manual will be mailed when available.



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, call 800.231.2759. Identify yourself with the “Psychopharmacology Conference” to receive the special group rate of \$177. Make reservations by September 22, 2005.

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

Meet the Program Assistant Series

We continue our monthly series of introducing the MIRECC Program Assistants. The Program Assistant is often the first person that people have contact with in the MIRECC office at each anchor site. We have asked each of them to write a small piece about themselves and their work in order for you to know them better. This month we are pleased to introduce **Ms. Melonie Shelton**, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (Little Rock, AR).



In November 1994 I started on a journey that would eventually lead to my present position with the MIRECC. I was 20 years old and I went to work for the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in the Department of Psychiatry. My “big” boss was G. Richard Smith, MD, who is now the Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry. The department was very supportive which allowed me to grow professionally. I worked with many wonderful people and received training that I’m sure I would have never received otherwise.

With the confidence that I gained from this job I decided to pursue my goal to have my own business and I purchased a beauty salon. I eventually sold the business and then made the decision to leave my position with UAMS to pursue a career in legal research within the telecommunications industry. After a time in private industry I came to realize how much I missed working with the great people at UAMS, so reconnected with them, and yes they took me back with open arms. This time it was Greer Sullivan, MD, the Director of the South Central MIRECC that welcomed me. Working for Dr. Sullivan, and serving as a program assistant for the SC MIRECC, means that I wear many different hats (i.e., knowing both the UAMS and VA rules/regulations). I assist Dr. Sullivan with many things such as scheduling, grant submissions, organizing meetings and travel. I also help Jennifer Vasterling, Ph.D. with the Pilot Study Program and helped her create an Access database to help track the accomplishments of MIRECC Research Investigators.

The people I work with are just incredible and I feel blessed to be with them each day. The latest chapter in my journey is that I recently became a full-time VA employee. Although I hated to officially leave UAMS, I still get to work with some of the same people, the people that have always been there for me and basically have watched me grow into an adult.

In my personal life I have a precious little girl, Savannah Rose. She is seven years old and will be in the second grade soon. She is a lot like me and just says whatever comes to mind. I am a single parent so my daughter and I are more like girlfriends. I don't know what I would do without her. She has brought so much to my life and to my family's life. She is a true blessing and I love her with all of my heart. I have plenty of stories and pictures so if you are ever in a bad mood just call me and I'll share them to make you smile. ☺ My plan is to be with the MIRECC for a while so hopefully I'll have the opportunity to work with all of you at some point.



Science News

Abstracts

Snow AL, Dani R, Soucek J, Sullivan G, Ashton CM, Kunik ME: Comorbid psychosocial symptoms and quality of life in patients with dementia. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 13(5):393-401, 2005.

OBJECTIVE: This study examines the association between treatable comorbid psychosocial symptoms and quality of life (QOL) in patients with dementia. In an effort to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship, this study includes both patient reports of their QOL and caregiver reports of patient QOL. **METHOD:** Eighty-nine dyads, consisting of a community-residing veteran with dementia and his family caregiver, were interviewed one time to determine the correlation between patient QOL and depression, functional disability, pain, and agitation. **RESULTS:** Higher patient-rated QOL was significantly associated with lower patient depression. Higher caregiver-rated patient QOL was associated with lower caregiver depression and higher patient functional status. Agitation was not related to patient-rated or caregiver-rated patient QOL. **CONCLUSIONS:** The psychometric and conceptual implications of possible differences between self- and other-ratings of QOL, and treatment implications for caregiver education interventions are discussed.

Loboprabhu S, Molinari V, Arlinghaus K, Barr E, Lomax J: Spouses of patients with dementia: how do they stay together "till death do us part"? *J Gerontol Soc Work*, 44(3/4):161-174, 2005.

Caregiver spouses struggle to cope with the multiple demands of caregiving and complexities of medical care. In this article, the emotional, marital attachment, and spiritual aspects of spousal caregiving for patients with dementia are addressed. This paper explores what keeps spouses together during this devastating illness. The literature has been reviewed to identify value systems that enable spouses to continue caregiving in these challenging circumstances. Articles were targeted that focus on the psychological and spiritual meaning of the marital bond, and its disruption when a spouse develops dementia. Recommendations for the clinical management of caregiver burden emerge from a pluralistic understanding that encompasses such constructs as "quid pro quo"; commitment and family solidarity; holding on to the familiar versus "letting go"; rupture and repair of the marital bond; mastery of separation-individuation; spirituality; changes in the sexual relationship; and reaching out for emotional support. Techniques are highlighted to help couples deal with loss and changes in communication and intimacy. A multidimensional approach by the geriatric mental health team is emphasized in order to provide optimal care to caregiver spouses.

September Conference Calls 1-800-767-1750

- 12—Education Core, 1:00 PM CT, access code 42297#
- 14—Neuroimaging Group, 9:00 AM CT, access code 24394#
- 18—Disorder Team Leaders, 2:00 PM CT, access code 20143#
- 20—Substance Abuse Team, General, 1:00 PM CT, access code 23400#
- 21—Program Assistants, 2:00 PM CT, access code 43593#
- 26—PRECEP Call, 11:00 AM CT, access code 39004#
- 27—Directors Call, 3:00 PM CT, access code 19356#

AND NOW, LET US PLEASE HAVE A MOMENT OF SILENCE

- For the gallant and brave men & women fighting to preserve our freedom both home and abroad.
- For the weary but willing National Guard units just returning back from fighting in Iraq, who are now on their way to New Orleans, Mississippi, Alabama and other surrounding states effected by hurricane Katrina.
- For the United States Coast Guard who are risking their own lives rescuing many from the roof tops of demolished homes, buildings and surrounding flood waters.
- For The Army Corps of Engineers who are frantically trying to rebuild the flood walls.
- For the victims of hurricane Katrina who are suffering conditions beyond human endurance.
- For the V. A. employees caught in the wake of hurricane Katrina. Their selfless dedication and moral fiber to stay with their patients and endure the uncertainty of time and rescue relief.
- For the many organizations and volunteers who are willing to risk their own safety, comforts and time away from their families.
- For the many nations who are coming to the aid of our nation in its most dire time of need.
- For our own Mental Health Providers whose strength and encouragement is so desperately needed to provide support to our many V.A. employees and V.A. patients across our great country involved in this horrific and untimely tragedy.

Words spoken at the 2005 Best Practice in Mental Health, National Meeting - Phoenix AZ. A prayer written by G. Matsuyama September 4, 2005

The next issue of the *South Central MIRECC Communiqué* will be published October 3, 2005. Deadline for submission of items to the October newsletter is September 27. 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 601-362-4471 x6191.

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

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

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