

## VISN 5 MIRECC Research Abstract

### **Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorders in Schizophrenia Melanie Bennett (PI), Alan Bellack, Lisa Dixon (Co-PIs)**

Alcohol abuse and dependence in people with schizophrenia is a serious public health problem that is associated with poor treatment compliance, increased rates of relapse, increased levels of violence, and poor overall health and life functioning. Treating alcohol use disorders in people with schizophrenia is especially problematic, as schizophrenia is marked by symptoms and neurocognitive and psychosocial deficits that make it difficult for patients to engage in the higher level cognitive processes or the sustained, self-directed behaviors generally required to reduce drinking. To date there are no interventions for alcohol use disorders with solid empirical support that have been designed for or adapted to meet the needs of this multiply-handicapped population. In this study we will develop and pilot test a multifaceted behavioral intervention for treating schizophrenia patients with alcohol use disorders that will incorporate strategies that have been found to be effective in reducing drinking, but tailor them to meet the needs of this population. The intervention will contain several components, including: (1) pre-treatment motivational interviewing to increase engagement and motivation; (2) short-term goal setting at each session; (3) social skills and alcohol refusal skills training; (4) education and coping skills training for managing depression, stress and other forms of negative affect; (5) relapse prevention training; (6) case management aimed at networking with social supports in the participant's environment and linking patients with activities and social networks in the community in order to create a reinforcing, non-drinking environment.

The study will run for 3 years and includes an initial pilot phase (Winter, Spring 2004), followed by a larger, randomized pilot trial (Summer, 2004 - Summer, 2005). Participants are paid for their time and participation in all research assessments, and are paid to attend group treatment sessions. The results will provide data on the utility of a new intervention, and the feasibility of using this intervention with dual diagnosis patients. As part of the treatment development phase of the study, we will be running a pilot group for patients with schizophrenia who meet criteria for alcohol abuse/dependence in the last month. Specifically, inclusion criteria are as follows:

Participants must have a diagnosis of schizophrenia or other serious mental illness (schizoaffective disorder, major depression, bipolar disorder, other psychotic disorder).

Participants must meet diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse/dependence in the three months.

Participants cannot have an Axis II diagnosis of MR.

Participants cannot have had a serious head trauma with the loss of consciousness.

Participants must be between the ages of 18-60.

Participants cannot be homeless.