

VISN 5 MIRECC Research Abstract

Assessing the Feasibility of Using the *MOVE!* Program with Seriously Mentally Ill Veterans Richard Goldberg, PhD

Overweight and obesity are at epidemic levels, and are the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States. These conditions are of particular concern among people living with serious mental illness (SMI) which may account in part for the high rates of hypertension, diabetes, coronary artery disease and early mortality documented among this patient group. While evidence-based weight loss programs exist for the general population, their effectiveness with people living with SMI is not well studied.

The VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) is now piloting a weight management and physical activity program entitled *MOVE!* (**M**anaging, **O**verweight/**O**besity for **V**eterans **E**verywhere) for use throughout the VHA. Pilot trails of the *MOVE!* program are being conducted in over 16 VA facilities including the Baltimore based Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC). *MOVE!* makes use of existing evidence-based techniques and materials and can be adapted as necessary for seamless transition into a variety of ambulatory care settings within the VHA. The program, which provides a standardized format for provision of weight management and physical activity evaluation and related intervention, is packaged as a manual for easy implementation. The intervention components are deliverable in modules, and tailored for individual differences in medical status, age, ethnicity, and readiness to engage in weigh management and physical activity behaviors.

To date, however, the *MOVE!* program has not been tested for use in mental health settings to target the issue of weight management among veterans living with serious mental illness (SMI). Given the urgent need to develop effective weight loss interventions for this at risk veteran group and our commitment to extending the use of existing VHA based resources and interventions to inform quality of care improvement efforts for SMI veterans, we propose in this pilot to:

1. Test the feasibility and assess in a preliminary fashion the efficacy of using the *MOVE!* program with 20 overweight or obese SMI veterans (defined as those with a Body Mass Index of 25 or more) receiving outpatient mental health services.
2. Use data from this pilot study, if promising, to develop a MERIT proposal for a full-scale randomized trail of the effectiveness of using *MOVE!* with SMI participants.

Consented participants will first complete an initial computerized assessment. Results are used to produce an individually tailored report for the patient, including instructions and recommendations for effective weight loss. The report also generates a CPRS progress noted and sets provider flags to help initiate needed follow-up services and consults. Participants will also be provided with individually tailored information and instructional handouts and offered an opportunity to meet with a staff member to formulate an individualized behavioral and treatment plan. Participants will also be contacted regularly in keeping with the *MOVE!* protocol and asked to complete follow-up assessment 1 month after starting the program. Our pilot will also involve brief semi-structured interviews with both veteran participants and those involved in the delivery of the intervention to help us assess issues of implementation feasibility, program acceptability, and need for program modifications in keeping with the cognitive and social deficits associated with SMI.