



## GRECCs: VA's Network of Aging Centers of Excellence Explores Aging, Age-related Diseases and Promising Interventions.

*...what follows is a small sampling from among the hundreds of research investigations currently underway in VHA's Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECCs).*

**Ann Arbor GRECC: Antipsychotic Use in Parkinson's disease patients.** Use of antipsychotics (APs) in Parkinson's disease (PD) is common. Noting the high rate at which persons with PD experience psychosis and dementia, investigators at the **Ann Arbor GRECC** hypothesized that use of APs placed patients at elevated risk for mortality. Multivariate analysis of a Veterans Health Administration database of PD patients revealed that antipsychotic users had more than twice the risk of death as observed in a matched group of non-users. The commonly used atypical antipsychotics identified during the study were olanzapine, risperidone, and quetiapine. This work highlights the need for caution when prescribing atypical antipsychotics to PD patients and the importance of always considering non-pharmacologic strategies in managing psychosis. To learn more about this research, contact Dr. Helen C. Kales at [helen.kales@va.gov](mailto:helen.kales@va.gov).

**Little Rock GRECC: Nutrient Intake and Hospitalization.** Older Veterans often become severely malnourished during hospitalization, leading to a range of complications and a higher risk of mortality. To prevent this from happening, inpatient programs need to closely monitor each patient's nutrient intake. Yet most hospitals are not adequately staffed to do this. The **Little Rock GRECC** developed and studied a novel means for completing daily patient nutrient intake assessments in less than one-third the time required by traditional methods, and the new approach was found to be more accurate as well. The greater ease and improved accuracy facilitates identification of patients at elevated risk for becoming malnourished. Anyone interested in this new approach to assessing nutrient intake can contact Dennis H. Sullivan, MD at [dennis.sullivan@va.gov](mailto:dennis.sullivan@va.gov).

**San Antonio GRECC: Proteins Block Neuronal Death.** A number of aging-related neurological diseases such as stroke, Lou Gehrig's disease, and Alzheimer's disease, involve the death of neurons in the brain. The **San Antonio GRECC** recently described ferroptosis, a previously unrecognized mechanism of neuronal death. Even more exciting, the investigators identified a protein that disrupts this mechanism. Enhancing the activity and delivery of this protein might be a new approach for supporting healthy brain aging. To find out more about this work, contact Dr. Nicolas Musi at [Nicolas.musi@va.gov](mailto:Nicolas.musi@va.gov).

## Warrior Wellness Study: Using Exercise to Promote Health & Wellness in Veterans with PTSD

Dr. Katherine Hall, a researcher with the **Durham VA GRECC**, is currently leading a 12-week pilot randomized controlled trial of supervised exercise for older Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Primary outcomes include PTSD symptoms, quality of life, and physical function.

In preparation for rolling out this study, interviews with older Veterans with PTSD were conducted. A dominant theme that emerged was that these Veterans were keen to be targeted for "wellness" interventions (instead of solely 'cessation of negative behaviors'), and were excited about the prospect of being offered a chance to practice the warrior ethos of health and fitness.



*Warrior Wellness Participants and Training Staff*

A manuscript describing the development and implementation of this study will be published in the *Translational Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine* (March 2018). Although this study is still out in the field, preliminary results are encouraging: 90% of Veterans who have enrolled in the program have completed 12 weeks of exercise, attending 81% of the offered sessions (MWF, 09:00-10:30).

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