



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.

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.

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.

Helping Older Patients Exercise!

Kalpana Padala, MD, a geriatrician at the Little Rock GRECC, is systematically breaking barriers to improve physical activity among older Veterans that need it most. She is making exercising fun to improve adherence. Although regular exercise



improves gait and balance, older Veterans do not adhere to them. Over half of older Veterans discontinue an exercise program within

six months of initiation due to various barriers. Dr. Padala studies exergames with Nintendo Wii-Fit and older Veterans are liking them. She uses a state-of-the-art gait and balance laboratory to discern subtle biomechanical changes resulting from the exercise program. She completed two pilot studies using Nintendo Wii-Fit. One pilot study showed that facility-based Wii-Fit exercises significantly improved balance compared to the computer-based cognitive exercises in a cohort of community dwelling older adults. The second study showed that home-based caregiver supervised Wii-Fit exercises significantly improved balance compared to walking in a cohort of community dwelling older adults with mild Alzheimer's dementia. Adherence and engagement in the exercise programs were high in both studies. Contact Dr. Padala @ kalpana.padala@va.gov.

Please join us for our next webinar on

Primary Care Essentials: Geriatric Syndromes – Optimizing Care in Advanced Dementia
Presented by Angela G. Catic, MD

January 11, 2018 at 2:00 PM ET
Registration Link: [Optimizing Care in Advanced Dementia - Geriatric Syndromes](http://www.va-eerc-ees.adobeconnect.com/r50cwkzlb583)

Live Presentation Link: <http://va-eerc-ees.adobeconnect.com/r50cwkzlb583>
Conference Number: 1-800-767-1750
Access Code: 27733#



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