



GRECCs: Clinical Innovations Benefitting Veterans of All Ages in All Settings

...what follows is a small sampling from over one hundred clinical innovations and demonstrations currently underway in VHA's Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECCs).

Cleveland GRECC's Geriatric Emergency Room: Older Veterans represent about 45% of the patients seen in VA emergency rooms and generate many revisits and admissions. "GERI-VET" adds a comprehensive geriatric evaluation (CGE) performed by "intermediate care technicians" (former military corpsmen) to ER visits for Veterans older than age 75. Follow-up to address issues identified through the CGE is intended to prevent ER revisits and hospital readmissions. Over 250 Veterans have participated in GERI-VET to date outcomes confirm the program's effectiveness in reducing rates of hospitalizations and ED re-visitations in this high-risk group.

Tennessee Valley GRECC Improves Care in Intensive Care Units through:

- Their **ABCDE delirium prevention bundle** results in less time on ventilators, 50% delirium reduction, 30% mortality reduction, more than a two-fold reduction in long term cognitive impairment, and reduced ICU and hospital lengths of stay. ABCDE achieves these impressive results by employing **A**wakening and **B**reathing trials through **C**oordinated efforts of nursing and respiratory therapy; **D**elirium surveillance, prevention, and treatment; and **E**arly mobilization and ambulation.
- The **THRIVE ICU Support Group**: served ICU survivors and family members in 33 sessions offered October 2016 - July 2017. Of those surveyed, 93% felt emotionally supported, 91% learned from others, 77% now understand common situations related to prolonged ICU stay, 86% would strongly recommend group participation to a friend, and 42% expressed interest in volunteering to provide peer support to others
- **ICU Diaries** were kept by 29 staff in 2017. On a 100-point scale, diary knowledge increased from 38.8 to 71.85, belief that diaries are beneficial rose from 62.74 to 76, and comfort level with educating family from 44.4 to 78.46. Benefits noted included increased family engagement, enhanced communication, and an enriched frame of reference for hospitalization.

Puget Sound GRECC: Memory Support for Older Adults with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] (MSOAP) provided an outpatient PTSD group the means to enhance memory skills and PTSD self-management. Alterations of attention/memory are among the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, and is a risk factor for dementia in older Veterans. After participating in the groups, questionnaires assessed PTSD symptoms, cognitive complaints, sense of self-efficacy, satisfaction with the group experience and materials, feedback on group improvement and indices of quality of life. Analyses demonstrate overall satisfaction, decreased depressive symptoms, no increase in PTSD symptoms, and increased sense of self-efficacy.

GRECCs: VHA's Centers of Excellence focusing on vulnerable Veterans through the advancement and integration of research, education and clinical innovation in geriatrics and gerontology within the VA healthcare system. There are currently twenty GRECCs located nationwide with the common mission of improving the quality of care for older Veterans. For more information please visit us at <http://www.va.gov/grecc>.



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RISE

In Rise Veterans who are at risk for falls or mobility difficulties participate in a combination of balance exercises, strength training, and an obstacle course. While the program is still in its initial stages so far participants are reporting large improvements. One Veteran reports that after three months of participation in the program he is able to genuflect at Mass for the first time in many years. Another participant who recently completed six months of the study reports that he can now walk better and stand on one leg. Previously he reported difficulty when trying to stand from a chair and was unable to stand on one leg without falling. <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/1117-Stepping-up-their-game.cfm>

Vets Foster Pets

Training veterans to be companion dog foster caretakers improved their quality of life and increased leisure-time physical activity, a novel project led by Dr. Heidi Ortmeyer at the Baltimore GRECC has revealed. This program was so well-received that its expansion has been proposed (with partnership with the VISN 5 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center -- MIRECC) to target older Veterans with PTSD.

