



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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Geri-Mobile Health: Supporting Older Veterans' Use of VA Mental Health Apps.

Dr. Christine Gould of the Palo Alto GRECC received funding from VA Geriatrics and Extended Care for a new clinical innovation program focused on self-management of mental health using VA mental health mobile applications (apps). The program, **Geri-Mobile Health**, is a proactive approach to mental health care closely aligned with the VA Whole Health initiative. Through the Geri-Mobile Health program, older Veterans will learn how to use three VA mental health apps (*Mood Coach*, *Mindfulness Coach*, and *PTSD Coach*) to manage mood, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms.

As part of the Geri-Mobile Health program, patient education materials will be developed to help older Veterans use VA Mobile Apps. Accompanying provider materials will be developed to assist mental health providers in teaching older Veterans about the apps. The materials will be piloted in the Geri-Mobile Health program in which providers will offer coaching support to: (1) promote technology use to ensure that older Veterans are able to use these self-management apps, and (2) encourage behavior change using the skills taught within the apps, helping Veterans meet their mental health care goals. Veteran-level and program-level outcomes will be evaluated.

Mental health self-management using VA mobile apps has the potential to reduce the large number of deaths by suicide among late-middle aged and older Veterans, a population that accounts for 65% of all Veteran deaths by suicide (Office of Suicide Prevention, 2016).

This project represents a new collaboration between the Palo Alto GRECC and the Dissemination and Training Division of the National Center for PTSD at VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

