



GRECC Clinical Programs Offer Value to Veterans and Caregivers

...what follows is a small sampling of initiatives from among the many Clinical Activities currently underway in VHA's Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECCs).

Gainesville GRECC: Think Delirium is a program that began as a non-institutional long-term care nurse driven project to early identify and treat hospitalized patients at risk for delirium. An interdisciplinary Delirium Consult Team consisting of nursing, psychiatry, geriatrics, and pharmacy was developed and is currently active at Gainesville and Lake City, FL VA Medical Centers. In addition, an electronic Delirium Response Order set is fully operational in both location thanks to the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 8 which funded the project. To date, over 898 consults were completed with an average of 5 new consults per day. Among Veterans in whom a consult was completed, 50% were discharged back to home and the 30-day re-admission rate was 22%. Most of the consult recommendations involved reducing polypharmacy and potential drug-drug interactions, using non-pharmacological approaches to delirium and addressing behavioral issues. For more information, please contact Rebecca Beyth by email at Rebecca.Beyth@va.gov or by phone at 352-548-6000 x. 6895.

Minneapolis GRECC: Improving the Diagnosis and Management of Neurocognitive Disorders (NCD) in Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) was initiated in 2014. The University of Minneapolis School of Nursing agreed to address this initiative as a QI project for students in their Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). In 2017, the SKY PACT, a pilot clinic for this new model, began collecting outcome data. They collected data on 39 specific parameters for Veterans with suspected cognitive impairment. In 2018, the student DNPs worked with the biostatistician and GRECC staff to refine process and outcome variables. Their focus is on the updated 2016 Dementia Management Quality Measures with special attention to Advance Care Planning and palliative care counseling; education and support of caregivers; and screening and management of behavioral symptoms. For more information, please contact Riley McCarten by email at Riley.McCarten@va.gov or by phone at 612-467-3314.

Palo Alto GRECC: E-Consults and Dementia is a new collaborative project, initiated in 2017, between the GRECC and the Palo Alto Health Care System Medical Service. Comprehensive E-consults involving chart review and phone evaluation are utilized to provide management of disruptive behaviors in Veterans with dementia who are physically or geographically otherwise unable to assess such expertise by other modalities. Providing the consult requires that the consulting geriatrician review the electronic chart and make telephone calls to family caregivers, or to both family and caregiving staff, to ascertain details about the Veteran's behaviors, triggers for the behaviors, management attempts, and other information. Developed plans include both behavioral and environmental management techniques and, if necessary, prescribing of medications. All medications are prescribed and reviewed by the consulting geriatrician. For more information, contact Joyce Tenover at Joyce.Tenover@va.gov or by phone at 650-849-0580.

Local Spotlight

Minneapolis GRECC Promoting Independent Aging (PRIA) Aging Well with Independence using Sensors in the Environment (AGING- WELL)

We are pleased to announce the recent addition of Adriana Seelye, PhD, to the Minneapolis GRECC. She currently leads two exciting and innovative research projects. Promote Independent Aging (PRIA) is a VA Clinical Science Research and Development (CSR&D) funded pilot project that uses technology to measure activity in the home, with the hope of helping veterans remain independent as they age. This project builds infrastructure for and demonstrates the ease of in-home sensor data collection approaches to detect early signs of cognitive decline in veterans at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System (HCS). Aging Well with Independence using Sensors in the Environment (AGING-WELL) is a larger National Institutes on Aging (NIA)-funded R01 project. Both studies involve measuring daily activity patterns by devices like a digital watch, home computer, instrumented pillbox, and a vehicle driving sensor. Machine learning approaches will determine which daily activity changes are the earliest signals of mild cognitive decline. Early detection of dementia is important and will allow for early implementation of preventative interventions and assistive technologies, which will prolong "aging in place" and maintain quality of life in our aging veterans.

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