



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: Puget Sound GRECC

Moving Free-ly is a medical center-based fall prevention education class which provides a multidisciplinary approach to fall prevention through awareness of risk factors and risk reducing interventions as well as promotion of independence and safety. Over the course of six sessions, patients learn about the intrinsic/extrinsic risk factors for falling, practice evidence-based exercises and learn to incorporate other fall reduction behaviors into their daily lives.

The class curriculum was developed and is facilitated by a Geriatrician with clinical research experience in fall prevention and osteoporosis, geriatric physical and occupational therapists and a geriatric pharmacist. Each class begins with lower extremity strength and balance exercises and then involves a didactic component mixed with group discussion or individual activities based on the content focus for that week. Outside of class, participants are encouraged to perform exercises daily, work on an activity or complete 'homework' pertaining to the content focus of the week, and modify behaviors which may place them at risk of falling. The class is offered in person at the Seattle division and is now telecast remotely (at the same time via VA Connect) to the American Lake division (thanks to the generous support of the Office of Geriatrics & Extended Care!).

Out of 30 Veteran's enrolled, 26 have completed the program. Nearly all participants reported that the class has reduced their fear of falling; most felt more comfortable talking to their health care provider about falling risks and medications, made changes to their environment to reduce the risk of falling, and would recommend the program to a friend; and few had falls during the class. For more information regarding program implementation, etc., please see Dr. Ritchey's contact information below.

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