Introduction to the War Related Illness & Injury Study Center

Susan L. Santos, PhD, MS Associate Director, Education & Risk Communication NJ WRIISC
Debbie Skeete-Bernard, RN, MSN
Nurse Health Educator NJ WRIISC
HISTORY OF THE WRIISC

- WRIISC is a National VA Post-Deployment Health Program, established by **Public Law 105-368, 105th Congress, 1998**
- The first two WRIISC sites were established in 2001; one in Washington, DC, the other at the East Orange, NJ. A third WRIISC site, became operational in Palo Alto, CA in 2008
- The WRIISC, now part of **Post-Deployment Health Services**, develops and provides post-deployment health expertise to Veterans and their health care providers through **clinical programs, education and risk communication, and research**
- Recently the WRIISC was designated as a “**VA-delivered Foundational Service**”
Research
Research produces knowledge and evidence-supported interventions and tools that can improve patient care and can be packaged and disseminated through education activities.

Education
Education of patients and providers can improve patient outcomes and identify gaps in knowledge to be addressed by research.

Clinical Care
Observations from clinical care lead to research questions and testable hypotheses, highlight gaps in provider and patient knowledge.
Multi-disciplinary team approach to address complex symptoms related to deployment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRIISC E-Consults</th>
<th>Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Evaluations</th>
<th>Environmental Exposure Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Thorough medical record review</td>
<td>• 3-5 day visit with WRIISC clinical team; Some diagnostic testing</td>
<td>• Assesses potential contribution of exposures to Veteran health concerns as a component of comprehensive evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diagnostic impressions</td>
<td>• Provides diagnostic impressions and a “road map” of tailored recommendations to improve function and quality of life</td>
<td>• Stand-alone service with telephone consults available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tailored recommendations for next steps</td>
<td>• Enhanced Airborne Hazards Evaluation</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engages Provider(s) and Veteran</td>
<td></td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Office of Patient Care Services
Post-Deployment Health Services
War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
Any deployed Veteran with a complex health condition and no known cause (medically unexplained symptoms, e.g. MUS)

Veteran has been already been thoroughly evaluated by their Primary care provider but specific questions remain unanswered

Any Veteran that has had many tests and/or treatment with little to no symptom improvement

Any Veteran with possible deployment-related environmental exposure problems or concerns possibly related to their health symptoms
## REFERRAL PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Makes the Referral</th>
<th>Referral Process</th>
<th>Who Can I Contact for More Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Veteran’s VA Primary Care Provider</td>
<td>• Uses the Inter Facility Consult process in the VA Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS)</td>
<td>• CA WRIISC 888-482-4376.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patient Aligned Care Team</td>
<td>• Refer to War Related Illness &amp; Injury Center (WRIISC)</td>
<td>• DC WRIISC 202-745-8249.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Post-deployment Health Champion</td>
<td>• Referrals are automatically triaged to regional WRIISC based on VISN location</td>
<td>• NJ WRIISC 973-676-1000 ext. 2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Environmental Health Provider</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Who Can I Contact for More Information**

- CA WRIISC 888-482-4376.
- DC WRIISC 202-745-8249.
- NJ WRIISC 973-676-1000 ext. 2500
WRIISC Multidisciplinary Clinical Team

- Physicians/Physician Assistants/Nurse Practitioners/Nurses
- Environmental Exposure Specialists
- Psychologists and Neuro-Psychologists
- Social Workers
- Education and Risk Communication Specialists
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Specialists: •Yoga/Meditation instructors
COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION COMPONENTS

- Internal Medicine and Neurological Exam
- Psychological Evaluation
- Neuropsychological Evaluation
- Advanced Diagnostic Testing when applicable (e.g., Neuroimaging)
- Environmental Exposure Assessment
- Education Session
- Complementary and Integrative Medicine
- Social Work Assessment
PROVIDER EDUCATION

Continuing Education Webinars
• 13 Webinars in FY17 - 3,555 attendees; 12 for FY 18
• 7 Accredited for delivery in TMS and TRAIN.org

Newsletters & Factsheets
• 7500+ downloaded/distributed

WRIISC Website
• www.WarRelatedIllness.va.gov
• 102,240 views in FY 17

E-learning Modules (on-demand)
• Web-based on Airborne Hazards, Environmental Health Evaluations and Gulf War Illness for VA providers on TMS and for community providers on TRAIN.org

Classes
• Agent Orange

Look for New Telehealth Initiatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Webinar Title</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/24/2017</td>
<td>Overview of the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)</td>
<td>Wes Ashford, MD, PhD, Matt Reinhard, PsyD, Drew Helmer, MD, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/28/2017</td>
<td>Women Veteran Health Issues</td>
<td>Julie Weitlauf, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>Chemical Weapons Exposures – clinical approach to evaluating exposure concerns</td>
<td>Michael Montopoli, MD, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/23/2018</td>
<td>Sexual Functioning in Veterans: Commonly Reported Difficulties, Dysfunctions and Disorders</td>
<td>Kelly McCarron, PsyD, Drew Helmer, MD, MPH, Julie Weitlauf, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6/2018</td>
<td>Depleted Uranium Exposures and Embedded Fragments – What Providers Need to Know</td>
<td>Melissa McDiarmid, MD, MPH, DABT, Joanna Gaitens, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20/2018</td>
<td>Integrative Health/Functional Medicine approaches to CMI/GWI</td>
<td>Sharon Democker, MD, Serena Satcher, MD, Doreen Korn, RN, MA, AHN-BC, HWNC-BC, QTTP (tentative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/2018</td>
<td>Garrison &amp; Deployment Related Exposures</td>
<td>Ralph Loren Erickson, MD, Terra Irons, PhD, Nicholas Lezama, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/2018</td>
<td>Best Practices for Evaluating Patients with CMI</td>
<td>Drew Helmer, MD, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/12/2018</td>
<td>Airborne Hazards update registry, clinical and research</td>
<td>Omowunmi Osinubi, MD, Michael Falvo, PhD, RCEP, Anays Sotolongo, MD, Michael Montopoli, MD, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/17/2018</td>
<td>Agent Orange and Vietnam Veterans,</td>
<td>Peter Rumm, MD, MPH, Michelle Prisco, MSN, ANP-C, Marybeth Heffernan, MSN, RN, APN-C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/14/2018</td>
<td>Veteran Radiation Exposures and the IRR (Ionizing Radiation Registry)</td>
<td>Danny K. McClung, BS, RRPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/25/2018</td>
<td>Moral Injury and Moral Repair</td>
<td>Kelly McCarron, PsyD, Omowunmi Osinubi, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/18/2018</td>
<td>Sleep and Health: Impact of Sleep Problems and Insomnia on Veteran Health</td>
<td>Andrea Goldstein-Piekarski, PhD, Wes Ashford, MD, PhD?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ON-DEMAND ACCREDITED EDUCATION FOR PROVIDERS

• Recorded Webinars on TMS and TRAIN.ORG for VA and Non-VA Providers
  – Introduction to Post Deployment Health Services – War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Airborne Hazards Registry Updates and Outreach Activities
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Airborne Hazards Research Findings and Clinical Applications
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Communicating With Veterans on Deployment-Related Exposure Issues
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Garrison Exposures – TMS only
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Military Cultures - Experiences, Reintegration, and Whole Health
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Post-9/11 Deployment-Related Exposures
  – WRIISC-PDHS: Pre-9/11 Deployment-Related Exposures

• E-learning Modules for VA and Non-VA Providers on TMS and TRAIN.org:
  – MOD 1: Assessing Deployment Related Environmental Exposures
  – MOD 2: Airborne Hazards
  – MOD 3: Gulf War Illness
The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC), a national program of Post Deployment Health Services (PDHS) within the Veterans Health Administration, is pleased to offer a series of e-learning training modules in collaboration with the Employee Education System (EES), as part of a new curriculum in Post Deployment Health. The training is available to VA healthcare providers nationwide “on-demand” through the Talent Management System (TMS) and at no cost to community providers via one of the most widely used national learning management platforms, the Training Finder Real-Time Affiliate-Integrated Network (TRAIN, website: http://www.train.org).

The WRIISC e-learning initiatives will offer continuing education credit and enable both VA and community providers, nurses, psychologists and social workers to learn about issues unique to Veteran care. Accreditation is offered in the following disciplines: ACCME, ACCME-NP, APAA, ANCC, APA, ASWB, and NYSED.

1. Our first module, “ASSESSING DEPLOYMENT RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES,” is intended to increase clinician knowledge and to inform learners about how to recognize the role and importance of deployment related exposure assessment, identify steps for determining deployment related environmental exposures, provide available post deployment health resources, and describe approaches to communicating deployment related exposure issues to Veterans, their caregivers, and their family members.
   - On TMS: VA 33195 - WRIISC Mod 1 - Assessing Deployment Related Environmental Exposures
   - On TRAIN: ID: 1070234 - WRIISC Mod 1 - Assessing Deployment Related Environmental Exposures

2. The second module, entitled “AIRBORNE HAZARDS,” provides clinicians with the knowledge needed to identify and understand deployment-related airborne hazards concerns of Veterans.
   - On TMS: VA 33405 – WRIISC Mod 2: Airborne Hazards
   - On TRAIN: ID: 1070422 - WRIISC Mod 2: Airborne Hazards

3. OUR LATEST E-LEARNING MODULE, “GULF WAR ILLNESS,” provides health care providers with the knowledge needed to identify, diagnose, manage and appropriately treat Gulf War illness in Veterans and to become familiar with and be able to apply the VA-DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Chronic Multi Symptom Illness as it can be applied to Gulf War Illness.
   - On TMS: VA 34572 - WRIISC Mod 3 - Gulf War Illness
   - On TRAIN: ID: 1074205 - WRIISC Mod 3 - Gulf War Illness
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filters</th>
<th>Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search By</td>
<td>WRIISC Mod 1: Assessing Deployment Related Environmental Exposures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC Mod 2: Airborne Hazards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC MOD3: Gulf War Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC-FDHS: Airborne Hazards Realilty Updates and Outreach Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC-FDHS: Communicating With Veterans on Deployment-Related Exposure Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC-FDHS: Military Culture - Experiences, Reintegration, and Whole Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC-FDHS: Post-9/11 Deployment-Related Exposures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRIISC-FDHS: Pre-9/11 Deployment-Related Exposures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VHA-EEB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Web & Print Materials
- 7500+ downloaded/distributed

WRIISC Web Pages
- 102,240 views

Classes
- Agent Orange: What You Need to Know
- Mindfulness Meditation (phone-based)
- Gulf War Exposures & Health Concerns
- Possible classes on Nutrition, Airborne Hazard concerns, Managing Chronic Pain a Behavioral Approach

Look for New Telehealth Initiatives
- New Telehealth Coming Soon!
• Newsletters:
  – WRIISC Advantage

• Fact sheets:
  – >20 Factsheets on general health, deployment exposures and complementary and integrative health including:
    • Airborne Hazards Concerns: *Information for Veterans*
    • Airborne Hazards & Open Burn Pit Registry
    • VA Environmental Health Registry Programs
    • Exercise to Manage Chronic Pain
    • Gulf War Illness
    • Many others....

• Brochures:
  – About the WRIISC for Veterans
  – About the WRIISC for Providers
  – Exposure Assessments
  – The Airborne Hazards Registry Initial In-Person Evaluation: *A Guide for Veterans and Providers*
Visit our website:

www.warrelatedillness.va.gov
How to Find Actively Recruiting Studies

https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/research/volunteer/index.asp