



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.

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Providing Comprehensive Care for Veterans with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

The James J. Peters VA SCI Interdisciplinary ALS Clinic provides comprehensive interdisciplinary care services for patients with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) with specialty in the unique needs of patients with severe functional disabilities. Housed in the VA Spinal Cord Injury Center and through collaboration and leadership by GRECC palliative care team expert Dr. Elizabeth Lindenberger, the clinic serves as the VISN 2 Center for ALS Care.

The clinic expanded its team to include a designated case manager, in addition to neurology, social work, occupational and physical therapy, psychology, nutrition and speech and language therapy. All team members receive training in palliative care needs for patients, and all patients receive palliative care service. For patients with advanced disease, home hospice services are offered in combination with clinic care to maximize home care support, attention to symptoms and quality of life, and continuity of care for patients and their families.

Services to support patients and caregivers include 1) addition of an ALS Association (ALSA) representative to the clinic team, offering ALSA resources such as support groups and home visits and 2) a monthly support group for Veterans with ALS and their caregivers. The ALS Clinic also continues to serve as a clinical training site for the JJP Interprofessional Palliative Care Fellows.

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