



# CINDRR Circular

Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

VA Health Services Research & Development

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, Gainesville FL

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, Tampa FL

January 2016

## CINDRR in the News

### Community-Based Agricultural Initiatives for Transitioning Rural Veterans

Karen Besterman-Dahan, Project Lead

Community reintegration is a VHA priority for returning Veterans. A comprehensive approach to reintegration that includes partnerships between the government, public, and private sectors is being explored through the Growing Veterans (GV) project, a *community agricultural initiative* (CAI). Locally-organized CAI across the U.S. address the needs of post-deployed Veterans who are transitioning to civilian life. There are many reported benefits of CAI in civilian populations, but less is known about the reintegration and rehabilitation benefits that these programs offer rural Veteran populations.

The goal of this project is to assess the impact of CAI on Veterans, their families, and the communities in which they live. Team members for this project represent both Tampa and Gainesville. Multiple CAI frameworks exist with various missions and goals; for instance, some Veteran-focused CAI's develop vocational skills, while others are focused on peer support

and community building; still others target specific participants such as women or homeless Veterans. This project plans to look at numerous CAI frameworks to compile promising practices and determine optimal frameworks for targeted participants. They have evaluated GV, a Veteran-initiated and operated CAI in Western Washington with two main farms and several outposts.

GV's framework is built on peer support and community building; their stated mission is "to empower military Veterans to grow food, communities and each other" and their vision is "to end the isolation that leads to suicide and make sustainable agriculture the norm." During site visits, using surveys and interviews of Veterans, their family members, community stakeholders, and non-Veteran CAI members, the project explored community reintegration, the impact of participation in GV, overall satisfaction, and ways to improve VA-CAI partnerships. Team members observed participants; conducted an assets mapping activity; demographic,

VR-12, M2CQ, general satisfaction surveys; and qualitative interviews.

Findings indicate that GV Veterans sought support through connections with their local CAI, which acts as a social, communication, and resource hub for rural Veterans. Reintegration and health quality of life measures suggest that Veteran GV members' overall psychological, social, and physical wellness has improved since joining GV.

Of the Veteran members who responded to surveys:

- 78% report feeling less depressed
- 50% report needing fewer medications
- 35% report improved pain levels
- 78% report getting more exercise
- 42% report improved diet
- 56% report improved family relationships
- 64% report making new friends without military experience

Quote from a Veteran member:

"I'm a part of something larger than myself...that affords me the space to be connected and plugged into people while continuing to be of service, while continuing to be useful, while continuing to be appreciated for the skills and the attributes that I carried with me from my military service."

## In Memorium 1963 - 2015

Lisa Hannold, PhD.....



Elizabeth "Lisa" Hannold, PhD, was a Research Health Scientist at the Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CINDRR) in Gainesville, FL. She passed away Monday, September 28, 2015. She was born in Kane, Pennsylvania and although she had muscular dystrophy all of her life, she was able to obtain a bachelor's and master's degree from Gannon University, Erie, PA.

Lisa moved to Gainesville with her parents in 2000 to pursue her PhD at the University of Florida. She received her PhD in Rehabilitation Science in 2004 and in September 2002, she joined Rehabilitation Outcomes Research Center (RORC), currently CINDRR, as a VA Pre-doctoral research fellow. From April 2004 to September 2004, Lisa was a VA post-doctoral fellow, and after graduation was hired as a VA investigator. Her research focused on community reintegration issues for injured OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and their families. Lisa worked as an Independent Living Skills Program Manager and retained a lifelong interest in improving the life skills of persons and Veterans with disabilities. She was an expert in qualitative research methods, and had extensive experience in conducting qualitative and

mixed methods studies.

Dr. Hannold is survived by her parents, Anna and Marvin Hannold and her beloved dog, Chazz, who could often be heard barking in the background during investigator meeting conference calls. Lisa's parents were able to bring Chazz to the hospital to say good-bye to her.

Director: William Mann, OTR, PhD

Tampa Co-Directors: Gail Powell-Cope, PhD, ARNP, FAAN and Steven Scott, DO

Gainesville Co-Directors: Diane Cowper Ripley, PhD and Charles Levy, MD

Newsletter Editor: Virginia Hessels

## Stephen Luther, PhD.

### Assistant Director, Director, Methodology Core & Co-Director of Rehabilitation

Steve Luther, Assistant Director, Director of the Methodology Core, and Co-Director of Rehabilitation Analytics Research at the HSR&D Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CINDRR), Tampa site, keeps busy with several HSR&D projects, an National Institutes of Health (NIH) project and mentoring several junior investigators. He is also an Associate Professor at the University of South Florida, College of Public Health, Department of Health Policy and Management. He has over 18 years experience as an outcomes/informatics researcher and as a psychometrician. His research interests focus on outcomes measurement of Veteran populations, particularly those with disabilities and chronic conditions.

Dr. Luther has ongoing HSR&D studies including “Measuring Quality of Life in Veterans with Deployment-related Post traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD)”, “Leveraging Information in the Electronic Health Record to Measure Pressure Ulcer Risk in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury” and is Co-PI on a study “Pain Care Quality and Integrated and Complementary Health Approaches” jointly funded by the VA HSR&D and the NIH.

From 2009-2013, he was the Tampa Site PI and Lead Investigator for the Clinical Inference and Modeling Project of the VHA Consortium for Healthcare Informatics Research

(CHIR). The CHIR was a 12 million dollar, multi-year, multi-institutional project funded by HSR&D to increase the use of natural language processing in VHA research. Building on this work, CINDRR investigators, led by Dr. Luther, have been able to conduct studies taking advantage of information locked within the more than three billion progress notes in the VHA electronic health record.

Dr. Luther began his VA research career in 1999, moving to full time in 2004. Previously, he worked in the field of cancer control, education and prevention, first at the Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center and later at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa Florida. While at Moffitt, he developed multiple programs, including the Lifetime Cancer Screening program which included mobile screening clinics and a free-standing screening center. This work led to an interest in quality and outcomes issues related to cancer treatment. He published several papers on the relationship between outcomes and physician volume of surgeries in the private sector and surgical quality in the VA.



## Rehabilitation Policy: Consideration for VA Research Investigators

### Overview by CINDRR NIDLRR Fellows, Leslie M. Santos, PhD & Luz M. Semeah, PhD

In the United States, there are two systems of federal disability policy and laws; one system is for people with disability (PWD), in general, and the other is for Veterans with disability (VWD). Disability policies and laws within these systems have been categorized by their purpose, to 1) provide monetary assistance, health care, and resources for people and Veterans with disabilities (PWD and VWD), and 2) promote equality, a level playing field, access, and the integration of PWD and VWD into their communities (Waterstone & Stein 2011). Researchers play an important role in informing policymakers regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation of disability-related policies, as well as contributing to the advancement of knowledge related to improving the lives of PWD and VWD.

Historically, there have been three leading models of disability policy: medical, economic, and socio-political. Each of these models promotes the development of legislation, government plans, and programs for PWD and VWD. (1) The **Medical model** emphasizes the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions and improvements in functioning (e.g., Social Security Insurance; Supplemental Security Income; Veterans Compensation Benefit Program); (2) the **Economic model** addresses how disability impacts the socio-economic power of PWD and the work a person can perform with or without accommodation, including the use of new technologies (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation Act; Workers' Compensation Act); and (3) the **Socio-political model** views PWDs as productive members of society and attempts to eradicate negative myths. The aim is to emphasize that disability is related to environmental barriers and societal failures to improve access to environment, programs and resources. The socio-political model is distinct in that it has been credited for mobilizing PWDs through legislation such as the American Disability Act (ADA). However, no single paradigm can completely explain or describe the disability experience; each paradigm shapes public attitudes and legislation regarding the provision of services and distribution of resources.

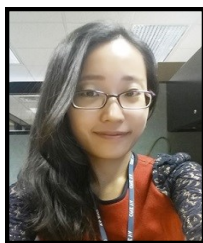
These models have different implications for the work that researchers do, the way society perceives PWD, how PWD perceive themselves, and policymakers' decisions on allocating and distributing resources. There are two important points to understand and consider: (1) how the VA defines disability through its research, and (2) the role the models play in research produced in the VA system. It is important for researchers to consider their views and definitions of disability and how they impact research. Additionally, they should consider the impact and value their research has on informing disability policy. In addition, it is important to identify the stakeholders interested in their specific research and policy arena. It is important for investigators to reflect on how their research findings can contribute, enhance, and impact the policy agenda.

Historical accounts reveal the VA's efforts in improving rehabilitation outcomes and influencing national disability policy at large (e.g., Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards). For example, the Vietnam Conflict, Gulf War, and OEF/OIF/OND Veterans helped with the recognition of war-related disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and

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## Mentorship Highlight

## UF Rehabilitation Science Students Contribute to CINDRR Projects



The University of Florida's (UF) Rehab Science PhD Program provides training to future rehabilitation scholars, building skills in research, teaching, and interdisciplinary teamwork in movement science and disability science. Three integral members of CINDRR, Paul Arthur, OTR/L, MS; Mijung Lee, MS; and Pallavi Sood, MS are pre-doctoral students in the program.

**Mijung (MJ) Lee** is a graduate student in the Rehabilitation Science Program at UF and a Research Assistant at CINDRR, NF/SGVHS, Gainesville, FL. Ms. Lee received a bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Yonsei University in S. Korea. She worked at Ottobock Healthcare for three years as a clinical specialist and a customer specialist before moving to the US in 2014 to start her Ph.D program at UF. She expects to graduate in 2018.

Mijung Lee's research interests include outcome measures in rehabilitation and application of assistive technology in remote settings. She is currently involved in Eyes behind the Video Camera (PI Dr. Sergio Romero), a project that uses remote technology to evaluate Veterans' home safety. She assisted in developing the study protocol, building a database, and conducting the intervention. She is working on another study that explores the feasibility of using a Tele-Presence Robot to conduct remote Home Safety Evaluations. She is assisting with protocol development and implementation of the protocol with clinicians.

**Paul B. Arthur, OTR/L** is a Research Assistant at CINDRR, a Pre-Doctoral Fellow at UF, and an OIF combat Veteran, having served 10 years in the US Army Reserves. He received master's degrees in occupational therapy and gerontology at the University of Indianapolis. His research interests include the identification of predictors of caregiver strain and burden, clinical trial design, standardized assessment design, and provider and researcher safety. His current research support is provided by UF and the Social Security Administration with projects focused on predicting caregiver strain in Alzheimer's disease and identifying methods for improving the disability determination process within the Social Security Administration. He hopes to graduate late 2016.

At CINDRR, Paul conducts in-home interviews with caregivers and Veterans with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias as part of Dr. Mann's HSR&D-funded trial, Non-pharmacologic Management of Challenging Behaviors of Veterans with Dementia. At this time, he has visited 160 Veterans and their caregivers for the baseline interview, and if possible, the 4 month and 8 month follow-ups. Paul lives in High Springs, Florida with his wife, Megan, daughter, Nina, 3 chickens, and a collie named Charlie.



**Pallavi Sood** is a third year doctoral student in Rehabilitation Science at UF and a Research Assistant at CINDRR, NF/SGVHS. Ms. Sood received her bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy from Kurukshetra University, India, before moving to the U.S. to obtain a master's of science degree in Prosthetics and Orthotics at the University of Pittsburgh. She completed her yearlong prosthetics residency at Comprehensive Prosthetics and Orthotics, Peoria, IL and worked as a

board-eligible prosthetist before moving to Florida to pursue her PhD. She has a graduate certification in Gerontology, Aging and Geriatric Practice, and Introduction to Clinical/ Transitional Research. Ms. Sood's research interests include clinical outcomes and methodology in the field of rehabilitation sciences, assistive technology, and falls outcomes among older adults. She hopes to graduate in summer 2017.

Ms. Sood is currently working on the Veteran Initiated Electronic Care Coordination (VIECC) project that trains Veterans to electronically transfer their health care information to their non-VA providers. She is currently assisting with participant recruitment, database design, data collection and data entry. Additionally, she is assisting with participant recruitment and protocol development on the Eyes behind the Video Camera project (PI, Sergio Romero).

## CINDRR Investigators' Recent Publications, Presentations, and Awards

Cowan, L, Kent, C, and Garvan, C. Agreement between Braden Nutrition Sub-scores & Dietician Assessments in an Acute Care Sample NPUAP in Orlando, Feb 20-21. 2015.

del Valle, Luz E, Freytes, M, Midolo J, Collison, B, Wing, K, Hall, L, & Uphold, CR. Printed and Web-Based OEF/OIF/OND Culturally- Relevant Family Education Materials. Presentation for VA Caribbean Healthcare System Research Day, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 22, 2015.

Dillahunt-Aspillaga, C., Schmitt, M., Ottomanelli, L., & Powell-Cope, G. Community Reintegration of Veterans with TBI: Implications for Practice. Symposium presented at the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, Dallas, Texas, October 2015. **This symposium received one of the highest ratings of all 2015 submissions with a military/VA focus.**

Levy CE, Halan S, Silverman E, Marsiske M, Lehman L, Omura D, Lok BC., Virtual Environments and Virtual Humans for Military Mild traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder: an emerging concept. *Am J Phys Med. Rehabil.* 2015, 94 (4): pe31-32/

Luther, S. L., McCart, J. A., Berndt, D. J., Hahm, B., Finch, D., Jarman, J., Foulis, P. R., Lapcevic, W. A., Campbell, R. R., Shorr, R. I., Valencia, K. M., & Powell-Cope, G. (2015). Improving identification of fall-related injuries in ambulatory care using statistical text mining. *Am J Public Health*, April 16. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 25880936

Trainer, J. K., O'Connor, D. R., Cotner, B. A., & Ottomanelli, L. (2015). It Takes More Than Skills: The Impact of Physical Context on Employment-Seeking for Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury [panel presentation]. 2015 Annual Meeting, Society for Applied Anthropology, Pittsburgh, PA. March 24-28, 2015.

# CENTER OF INNOVATION ON DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH (CINDRR)

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CINDRR is a multi-institutional research center at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (Gainesville, FL) and the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and Clinics (Tampa, FL). Scientists at this Veterans Health Administration Center of Innovation conduct research to develop strategies to improve—for Veterans of all ages—inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation services and long-term management of disability, including issues that impact family members.



<http://www.cindrr.research.va.gov>



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
 Veterans Health Administration  
 Center of Innovation on Disability  
 and Rehabilitation Research

## Upcoming Conference... 2016 Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Conference

with special emphasis on fall, fall injury, and pressure ulcer prevention. **When:** April 11-15, 2016 **Where:** Renaissance Hotel, Glendale AZ.  
**Who:** Nurses, Physical/Occupational/Kinesio-therapists, Risk Managers, & Physicians † Contact [Valerie.Kelleher@va.gov](mailto:Valerie.Kelleher@va.gov) for information

### Research in Progress...Tampa Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium (CENC) Site PI, Heather Belanger

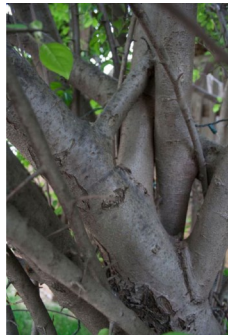
The mission of the CENC is to complete gaps in knowledge about the basic science of mTBI (also termed concussion or mild TBI), determine its effects on late-life outcomes and neurodegeneration, identify Veterans most susceptible to these effects, and identify the most effective treatment strategies. The CENC is a multi-center collaboration linking premier basic science, translational, and clinical neuroscience researchers from the DoD, VA, academic universities, and private research institutes to effectively address the scientific, diagnostic, and therapeutic ramifications of mTBI and its long-term effects. Tampa, FL is a CENC site.

Because the association between concussion and neurodegeneration is unknown, CENC is studying a large, longitudinal cohort of those exposed and unexposed to concussion(s), with the intent of measuring chronic sequelae and comorbidities associated with concussion and deployment

experiences. The goal is to study the links between concussions, neurodegeneration, and other chronic conditions.

All participants undergo an initial comprehensive assessment (including brain imaging, genetic, endocrine, sensory, balance, cognitive and psychological testing) to determine their concussion status along with the prevalence, type, and intensity of chronic sequelae from concussion and associated comorbidities.

All participants also undergo periodic in-person and telephone reassessment to monitor the status of the sequelae and comorbidities and to assess for evidence of neurologic (cognitive, behavioral, physical) decline.



"Tangled" by Amanda

"I shot this to express how I feel about the VA; it is like a maze. The system is not set up for people to talk through things. When I finally got a doctor through the VA, my practitioner was asking me this battery of really intrusive questions, but there was no space to work it out. There is a serious lack of listening at the VA. People will ask you questions, but no one is listening to you."

[http://www.va.gov/FROMWARTOHOME/Living\\_Stories.asp](http://www.va.gov/FROMWARTOHOME/Living_Stories.asp)

Understanding Barriers to Mental Health Care for Recent War Veterans through Photovoice, True, G, Rigg, K, Butler, A. *Qual Health Res*, October 2015 vol. 25 no. 10 1443-1455.

### Rehabilitation Policy, Continued

conditions/diseases based on environmental exposure. The VA responded by developing interventions and programs to respond to their needs. Through the partnerships with community-based organizations, the VA has ensured that the social and psychological needs and the long term management of disabilities of Veterans and their families are met. The VA efforts, in collaboration with many Veteran and non-VA organizations, have given the general population an understanding of chronic diseases and medical conditions impacting the development of programs, legislation, and policies that impact all Americans.

Historically, returning Veterans have influenced how the public and policymakers view disability and have the potential to use their unique status to advocate measures that can benefit the disability community and beyond.