



# 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

April 2017

## CINDRR in the News

### David Winchester, MD, Chosen Gold Status Practice Leader



David E. Winchester, MD

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) leaders named 13 “gold status” practices following a competition held November 16, 2016. These proven practices range from efforts that improve care coordination, such as increasing the availability of an opioid overdose treatment among clinical and community partners, to those that increase employee engagement, such as a new on-boarding program for VHA employees. Multiple practices focused on improving access to care and enhancing the Veteran experience, with an emphasis on serving rural Veterans. VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin created the [Diffusion of Excellence Initiative](#) to identify and disseminate promising practices and standardize those that promote positive outcomes for Veterans system-wide. As part of this initiative, a semi-annual competition solicited promising practices from frontline VHA employees.

“Just in Time Cardiology: Improving Access through Consult Triage,” is a gold status practice developed by Dr. David Winchester from the [North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health Care System](#). The system shifts from a one-size fits all approach where all consults are seen in clinic, to a system where physicians review specialty care requests as soon as they are made. Depending on the Veteran’s condition, physicians may ask that the patient be seen at a traditional face-to-face appointment or complete the request through an electronic consultation (e-consult). This

practice speeds response times for simple questions, reduces wait times for clinic appointments, and eliminates travel for unnecessary appointments with specialists. During the first year of the program, the amount of consultations and e-consults increased by 40% to 60%, but the practice reduced wait times by 46%.

As gold status fellows, the employees who pioneered these practices will spend the next six months guiding another facility (or more than one) in adapting and implementing their practices. The fellows participated in a three-day Diffusion of Excellence Summit in mid-January at the [VHA SimLEARN National Simulation Center](#) and [Orlando VA Medical Center](#). During the Summit, the fellows worked together with representatives from the new facility to develop action plans for implementation.

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## CINDRR in the News

### Joshua Yarrow, PhD, Wins Prestigious PECASE Award

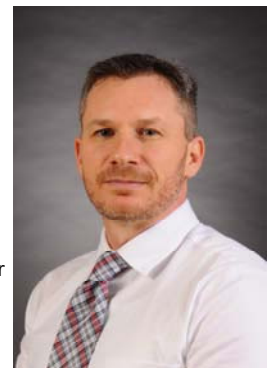
Joshua Yarrow, PhD, a VA research health scientist specializing in physiology and kinesiology at North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, was named by President Obama as one of 102 scientists and researchers selected to receive the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers. His team is currently conducting the second phase of a randomized clinical trial evaluating the safety/efficacy of testosterone plus finasteride therapy on neuromuscular function and metabolic health in men with ambulatory dysfunction subsequent to motor-incomplete spinal cord injury (SCI).

“I congratulate these outstanding scientists and engineers on their impactful work,” President Obama said. “These innovators are working to help keep the United States on the cutting edge, showing that Federal investments in science lead to advancements that expand our knowledge of the world around us and contribute to our economy.” According to a White House press release, “The Presidential Early Career Awards highlight the key role that the Administration places in encouraging and accelerating American innovation to grow our economy and tackle our greatest challenges.

Dr. Yarrow, who has been with the VA since 2009 and serves as an assistant scientist at the University of Florida, was one of only three scientists from across the VA to be tapped for the prestigious award. Yarrow’s research is funded by the VA and focuses broadly on determining how the nervous and endocrine systems interact with musculoskeletal tissue to regulate bone and muscle maintenance in adulthood. If successful, the research has the potential to significantly improve quality of life for Veterans and non-veterans with SCI.

“I am truly humbled to be selected as a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers,” Yarrow said. “This award reflects largely on the mentorship that I received from Drs. Stephen Borst, Thomas Wronski, and Prodig Bosc; the dedication of my lab members, including Ms. Christine Conover and others; the support provided by VA and the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System; and the guidance of my collaborators and colleagues at VA and the University of Florida. My hope is that this award raises awareness of Veterans’ health issues and of the important role that VA Research Service plays in addressing these concerns.” The awards, established by President Clinton in 1996, are coordinated by the Office of Science and Technology Policy

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Joshua F. Yarrow, MS, PhD

## Career Development

### Racine M. Brown, PhD, HSR&D Associated Health Fellow, CINDRR, Tampa



Dr. Racine M. Brown

Racine Marcus Brown, PhD is a first year HSR&D Associated Health Fellow at CINDRR's Tampa, Florida site. He is a 2013 graduate of the PhD program in applied anthropology at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Dr. Brown is also a 2006 Master of Arts graduate in anthropology from the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina and a 1999 Bachelor of Arts graduate in anthropology from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

From 2000-2004, Dr. Brown served as an Infantry Officer in the United States Marine Corps. His research interests include traumatic brain injury (TBI), metabolic health, and obesity. His long term career goal is to become a Principal Investigator at the VA.

During his current fellowship, Dr. Brown is conducting pilot research on predictors of obesity in Veterans with TBI, with a particular focus on the post-rehabilitation phase of the TBI trajectory. Co-morbidities under exploration include injury severity, cognitive impairment, motor impairment, and sleep health. This work involves secondary data analysis of data from the VA TBI Model Systems of Care Study (TBIMS)

as well as other studies conducted with TBIMS enrollees. Dr. Brown is working closely with Tampa VA TBIMS site PI Risa Richardson, PhD, and her research team in writing manuscripts and in developing a career development award (CDA-2) application using the data.

For the CDA-2, Dr. Brown plans to develop models of obesity and sleep problems in Veterans with TBI from secondary data and to place these findings in a broader social and cultural context through primary data collection and analysis. As a long-term post CDA-2 goal, he hopes to develop or adapt a weight control intervention similar to the VA's MOVE! program for TBI patients to reduce or prevent overweight and obesity in Veterans with TBI post-rehabilitation.

Prior to the start of his current fellowship, Dr. Brown worked as a project manager at CINDRR on the Growing Veterans program evaluation (Besterman-Dahan, PI), the Pressure Ulcer Risk Study (Luther, PI), the PTSD Quality of Life Study (Luther, PI), the Hand-glove Efficacy Study (Scott, PI), and the Manage Emotions to Regulate Aggression Study (Miles, PI). He is grateful for the opportunity to continue working with caring and highly engaged people at CINDRR in a new capacity.

In his spare time, Dr. Brown likes nature walks, reading, and working in the garden at his home in Temple Terrace.



Slande Alliance, center, pictured with Ruby B. Harvey, VA Acquisition Academy Chancellor and Gregory McLean, VA Acquisition Academy Vice Chancellor on 2/3/2017

### Ms. Slande Alliance Graduates from the Program Management Fellows Program

The Project Management (PM) Fellows Program is hosted by the Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA). It was designed to address the program and project management workforce shortages within VA by helping develop program management, general business, and leadership skills. The program focuses on the professional development of future project managers who can manage high profile or mission-critical projects. The program focused on leadership skills, enterprise project management, and critical thinking. Additionally, she worked on enterprise wide projects and contracts, mostly related to modernization of enterprise-wide information technology (IT) systems, IT infrastructure planning, and standardization of VA hospital Point of Use Systems. Ms. Alliance received a level two Contracting Officer's Representative (COR-II) certification and a mid-level Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM-mid-level). These certifications align with the Program Management Improvement Accountability Act that focuses on improving how agencies manage projects to remain on time and on budget. In addition, Ms. Alliance received yellow belt training to help increase efficiency in VA projects and processes.

## CINDRR Continuing Veteran Initiatives

### Veteran Engagement Council

At the initial Veteran Engagement Council (VEC) meeting, held March 15, 2017, CINDRR, Tampa, FL, Samuel Phillips, PhD, introduced himself and discussed his work. Members of the council had been sent a presentation packet to review prior to the meeting. Dr. Phillips presented "Helping Veterans with Upper Limb Amputation Receive Prosthetics and Meet their Needs." He discussed the purpose of the study, the study team, the various options available in prosthetic arm/hand choices, and the advantages and disadvantages of 3D prosthetics. He discussed the study design and the aims of the research, the data that will be collected during the study, and asked the VEC members if there were other important questions that should be asked. Karen Besterman-Dahan, PhD, discussed qualitative research and how asking questions can get at the "why," whereas standard research measures tend to ask "if" and "how much."

The VEC members were asked for their comments on the proposed research from the Veteran perspective. Many of the questions from the VEC members involved the Veterans' preferences, i.e., would Veterans prefer to start with a 3D model (many benefits, including taking approximately 30 hours to make) while waiting for their "Cadillac" to be built (can take up to six months)? Do Veterans worry that if they don't use a prosthesis will they use their intact limb too much which can cause injury? Will using a prosthesis sooner give them more confidence? Is being able to select the color and design of the prosthesis important to Veterans? Can the prosthesis be tattooed? What else is 3D printing technology used for?

The discussion then focused on the need to compare the advantages of the 3D printed prosthesis from the prosthetist's perspective. VEC members asked questions about how various demographics affected a Veteran's prosthetics choice (left hand/right hand, dominant vs. non-dominant hand), activities (sports, computers, etc.), personal life (married/single) and the time without a limb if it has to be repaired. The group discussed how societal changes can affect what people perceive as cool and how those changes affect the choices people make regarding their prosthetics. For example, amputees are not as likely to hide their prostheses as they once were.

The next VEC meeting will be held on April 19, 2017. Gail Powell-Cope, PhD, ARNP, FAAN, will present on CINDRR research projects.



3D Printed Arm; Both Arms Were Lost in a Bombing Raid

## CINDRR New Research, Gainesville

### Spanish Online and Telephone Intervention for Caregivers of Veterans with Stroke, Maggie Freytes, PhD, PI

Stroke is major cause of disability and a leading cause of outpatient medical utilization within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Unlike some other chronic diseases, strokes occur suddenly and caregivers, particularly family members, have little time to prepare and adjust to their new caregiving roles. Previous research has found that family members, particularly Hispanics, have high rates of depression and burden when their stroke survivors return home from the hospital or assisted living facility. Providing Hispanic caregivers with culturally-appropriate information, support, and skills has the potential to reduce negative caregiver outcomes and increase the likelihood that stroke survivors remain in their community. Unfortunately, no studies have focused on support interventions specifically for Hispanic caregivers.

The main objective of the study is to test the efficacy of a brief, telephone and online problem-solving intervention using the Spanish version of the VA RESCUE stroke caregiver website. The objectives are: 1) reduce caregiver burden and depression, 2) improve caregivers' problem-solving abilities, self-efficacy, and quality of life, 3) improve Veterans' functional abilities and determine the intervention's impact on Veterans' healthcare utilization, 4)

determine budgetary impact, and 5) determine caregivers' perceptions of the intervention.

The long-term goal of the study is to partner with leaders to implement a culturally relevant, accessible, and cost-effective intervention for caregivers of Veterans post-stroke throughout the VHA.

The project will conduct a two-arm (8-session intervention vs. standard care), randomized controlled clinical trial with three assessment points. A sample of 290 stroke caregivers recruited from the VA Caribbean Healthcare System in San Juan, Puerto Rico (PR) will be randomly assigned to either an intervention or a standard care group.

The project consists of a problem-solving intervention and information/tools from the Spanish-version of the RESCUE stroke caregiver website conducted via telephone by a trained mental health counselor. Post-test assessments will be collected at 1 and 12 weeks post-intervention and qualitative interviews will be conducted to assess caregivers' perceptions of the intervention.



I. Magaly Freytes, PhD

## Recent CINDRR Publications and Presentations

Yao, M, Allen, L, Diehl, K, Park, N, Driver, VR (2016) Retrospective Cohort Study Evaluating Clinical Outcomes in Lower Extremity Ulcers Treated with a Bi-layered Bioengineered Skin substitute (BBSS) as compared to Standard therapy. *Gen Med* (Los Angeles) 4:282.doi: 10.4172/2327-5146.1000282.

<https://www.esciencecentral.org/journals/retrospective-cohort-study-evaluating-clinical-outcomes-in-lower-extremityulcers-treated-with-a-bilayered-bioengineered-skin-subst-2327-5146-1000282.php?aid=84237>

LeLaurin, J, Schmitzberger, M, Eliazar-Macke, N, Freytes, I.M, Orozco, T, and Uphold, C. (2017, February 27). Internet and Telephone Support Intervention for Stroke Caregivers: A Pilot Study. Poster session at the University of Florida College of Medicine Celebration of Research, Gainesville, FL.

Cowan, L, Garvan, C, Kent, C., Stechmiller, J.(2016) How Well Does the Braden Nutrition Subscale Agree With the VA Nutrition Classification Scheme Related to Pressure Ulcer Risk? *Federal Practitioner*, December 2016, [www.fedprac.com](http://www.fedprac.com)

Jia, H, Pei, Q, Sullivan, CT, Cowper Ripley, DC, Wu, SS, Vogel, WB, Wang, X, Bidelsbach, D, Hale-Gallardo, JL, and Bates, BE. (2017) Regional Variation in Post-stroke Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Care among Veteran Residents in Community Nursing Homes. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, March 2017.

Cotner, BA, Ottomanelli, L, O'Connor, DR, Trainor, JK. (2017) Provider-identified Barriers and Facilitators to Implementing a Supported Employment Program in Spinal Cord Injury. *Journal of Disability and Rehabilitation*, March 2017.

Belanger, HD, Powell-Cope, G, Spehar, AM, McCranie, M, Klanchar, A, Yoash-Gantz, R, Kosasih, JB, and Scholten, J. (2016) The Veterans Health Administration's Traumatic Brain Injury Screen and Evaluation: Practice Patterns. *JRRD*, Volume 53, Number 6.

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As a Gold Status Fellow, Dr. Winchester will work with the Iowa City VA Health Care System, the implementing facility, to help them adapt and replicate his Gold Status practice.

Check out the [VHA Twitter page](#) for updates on their progress.

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within the Executive Office of the President. Awardees are selected for their pursuit of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology and their commitment to community service as demonstrated through scientific leadership, public education, or community outreach.

Dr. Yarrow will receive his award at a ceremony at the White House later in the year.

For additional information

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/09/president-obama-honors-federally-funded-early-career-scientists>

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

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Gainesville Associate Directors: Diane Cowper Ripley, PhD and Charles Levy, MD  
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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 *inform rehabilitation practice and policy for Veterans through rigorous interdisciplinary research.*

CINDRR's scientific mission is threefold: **1)** to conduct leading edge studies on the access, utilization, quality, cost, delivery, and health and systems outcomes of rehabilitation services; **2)** to spearhead the implementation and dissemination of the most promising evidence-based rehabilitation practices; and **3)** to train future generations of rehabilitation research scientists.



## Upcoming Conference... **2017 Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Conference**

with special emphasis on falls, fall injury, and pressure ulcer prevention. **When:** April 10-14, 2017 **Where:** Renaissance Hotel, Glendale AZ.

**Who:** Nurses, Physical/Occupational/Kinesio-therapists, Risk Managers, & Physicians

**Register:** <http://www.cvent.com/d/0fq5kc> **Contact:** [Valerie.Kelleher@va.gov](mailto:Valerie.Kelleher@va.gov) for information

## Behind the Mask, Revealing the Trauma of War

### In making a mask, soldiers who suffer brain injuries put a face to their pain

*"I thought this was a joke," recalled Staff Sgt. Perry Hopman, who served as a flight medic in Iraq. "I wanted no part of it because, number one, I'm a man, and I don't like holding a dainty little paintbrush. Number two, I'm not an artist. And number three, I'm not in kindergarten.*

*Well, I was ignorant, and I was wrong, because it's great. I think this is what started me kind of opening up and talking about stuff and actually trying to get better."*

Hopman is one of many service members guided by art therapist Melissa Walker at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE), which is part of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. [READ MORE: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/healing-soldiers/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/healing-soldiers/)

and

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/02/150213-art-therapy-mask-blast-force-trauma-psychology-war/>



## CINDRR New Research, Tampa

### Virtual Medical Modality Implementation Strategies for Patient Aligned Care Teams to Promote Veteran Centered Care



First row-left to right: Jolie Haun, PhD, EdS, Wendy Hathaway, MA  
Second row-left to right; Nicole Antinori, MBA, Margeaux Chavez, MA, MPH, CPH

## New Beginnings for Team Connect: HSR&D Merit Project Kicks Off!

VA has developed several Virtual Medical Modalities (VMM) – the most widely used are My HealtheVet, Vet Link Kiosks, Telehealth, and Mobile Applications. Developing and integrating VMM into the VA system of care improves efficiency, maximizes resources and enhances patient outcomes. Research shows that clinical care providers are integral in establishing and supporting Veteran use of VMM.

Team Connect, led by PI Jolie Haun, is collaborating with Office of Connected Care and James A. Haley Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) to conduct an HSR&D implementation study on provider behavior. The goal of the study, entitled: Virtual Medical Modality Implementation Strategies for Patient Aligned Care Teams to Promote Veteran Centered Care, is to increase integrated use of VMMs by PACT to support Veteran-centric health care delivery.

The three-year study, HSR&D IIR 15-443, will develop PACT-focused implementation strategies to inform regional and national VMM implementation efforts.