



Veterans Affairs  
Medical Center  
Durham, North Carolina

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

*Director*  
Eugene Z. Oddone, MD, MHS

*Associate Director*  
Hayden B. Bosworth, PhD

*Administrative Officer*  
Ed Cockrell, MPH

RESEARCH FACULTY

Lori Bastian, MD, MPH

Marian Butterfield, MD, MPH

Patrick S. Calhoun, PhD

Rowena J. Dolor, MD, MHS

Kelli Dominick, PhD

David Edelman, MD, MHS

Deborah A. Fisher, MD, MS

Sheri A. Keitz, MD, PhD

David Matchar, MD

Douglas McCrory, MD, MHS

Dawn Provenzale, MD, MS

David L. Simel, MD, MHS

Karen Steinhauser, PhD

James A. Tulskey, MD

Morris Weinberger, PhD

John D. Whited, MD, MHS

John Williams, MD, MHS

William Yancy, MD, MHS

BIostatisticians

Cynthia Coffman, PhD

Tara Dudley, MStat

Steven C. Grambow, PhD

Amy Jeffreys, MStat

Jennifer Hoff Lindquist, MS, MStat

Barry K. Moser, PhD

Maren Olsen, PhD

Karen M. Stechuchak, MS



Duke University  
Medical Center

# Research Update

## Institute for Clinical and Epidemiological Research

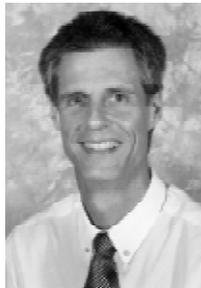
Volume V, No. 3

A Veterans Affairs Center of Excellence

Fall 2002

### ICER Welcomes New ERIC Statistician

The ICER faculty welcomes Barry K. Moser, Ph.D., as the ERIC's new statistician. Dr. Moser also has an appointment as a research professor in Duke University's Department of Biostatistics and Bio-informatics and his assignment is in Duke's Cancer Prevention, Detection, and Control Research Program. He arrived here in July from Oklahoma State University where he was a professor of statistics for the previous 17 years.



Barry Moser, Ph.D.

Dr. Moser says he was drawn to the challenges the VA and Duke presented. "I was attracted to the VA and Duke medical centers by the quality and quantity of interesting medical research problems. The opportunity to develop new statistical methodologies, to collaborate with medical researchers and to analyze their data was very attractive."

Dr. Moser's research interests include group sequential methods in clinical trials, sequential dose response procedures, statistical linear models with an emphasis in clustered designs, and estimation and testing in binary data. While at Oklahoma State University he taught classes in clinical trials methodology, stochastic approximation methods, statistical linear models, designs of experiments, regression analysis, mathematical statistics, multivariate statistical theory, Bayesian decision theory, advanced hypothesis testing, and engineering statistics.

Dr. Moser received his B.S. in mathematics from Illinois Benedictine College and his M.S. and Ph.D. in statistics from Purdue University. He is the lead or co-author of numerous journal articles and is a member of the American Statistical Association.

### Morris Weinberger Receives Vision Award

Morris Weinberger, Ph.D., a VA Career Research Scientist, was presented with this year's Vision Award at the Improving Chronic Illness Care's (ICIC) National Congress on Improving Chronic Care: Innovations in Research and Practice. The award is given annually by the ICIC, a national program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and based in Group Health Cooperative's MacColl Institute. The award was established "to recognize achievement and leadership in linking the fields of chronic care research and clinical quality improvement." The ICIC recognized Dr. Weinberger "for his innovative and methodologically rigorous research on methods to improve the care of patients with arthritis, diabetes, and other major chronic conditions."

"This award means a lot to me," says Dr. Weinberger. "Under the directorship of Dr. Ed Wagner [M.D., M.P.H.], the ICIC has conducted groundbreaking work in translating research into practice to improve the process and outcomes of care for patients with chronic illness. The ICIC has challenged us to think about chronic illness care, and it has supported the implementation of innovative strategies within health care systems."

Dr. Weinberger was presented the award at the Congress on Improving Care: Innovations in Research and Practice, in Seattle, on September 9th.

### Deborah Fisher Receives Junior Faculty Development Award

Deborah A. Fisher, M.D., M.S., has been awarded a two-year American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) Junior Faculty Development Award. The ACG's stated goal for this award is to provide support for

*Continued on Page 2*

junior investigators working toward independent careers in clinical research in gastroenterology and hepatology, to “support clinical investigators of outstanding promise,” and “to ensure that a major proportion of a junior investigator’s time is protected for research.” The award is for \$50,000 a year for two years.

For her research, “I plan work on several projects related to the theme of patient-centered outcomes for gastrointestinal malignancy surveillance,” says Dr. Fisher. “These will include further development and psychometric testing of an instrument to measure health-related quality-of-life in patients undergoing surveillance of Barrett’s esophagus and investigating predictors of patient participation in colorectal screening.”

“The award will allow me to decrease my clinical duties and increase the time I devote to research,” says Dr. Fisher. “Having ‘protected’ research time is especially critical as I make the transition from fellow to faculty.” Dawn Provenzale, M.D., who acted as Dr. Fisher’s mentor during her fellowship, will continue to be her mentor during this transition.

## Hayden Bosworth Receives Early Career Award

Hayden Bosworth, Ph.D., has received the Margaret M. Baltes Early Career Award from the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). The GSA is the oldest and largest national, multidisciplinary scientific organization dedicated to the promotion of gerontological research. The award is given to those recognized for outstanding early career contributions in biological sciences, clinical medicine, behavioral and social sciences, and who have had their Ph.D. degree for less than 10 years.

“I feel honored and am very appreciative for receiving this award,” says Dr. Bosworth. “I believe I’m the fourth person to receive this, so I feel this is a particularly great honor.”

The award comes with an honorarium, which will be presented to Dr. Bosworth at the Fall 2002 GSA meeting. He will also present a lecture at the Gerontological Society of America Fall 2003 meeting in San Diego.

## New Post-Doctoral Fellows

The Center would like to welcome two new post-doctoral fellows, Drs. Corrine I. Voils and Stewart Alexander, as part of its commitment to supporting healthcare professionals develop applied skills in health services research methods.

### Corrine I. Voils, Ph.D.

Corrine I. Voils, Ph.D., began her Office of Academic Affairs-funded Post-Doctoral Fellowship this past July. Her research interests are the impact of social or personal characteristics can have on health care access and provider care. “I’m interested in how group membership, such as race, affects access to health care,” says Dr. Voils. “I’m also interested in how a healthcare provider’s personal health

characteristics, such as obesity or smoking, can affect the medical care that provider gives. And I’m interested in optimistic bias, and the locus of control regarding health behaviors.”

Dr. Voils received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1995. She received her M.S. in Experimental Psychology in 1998 and her Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology in 2001, both from the University of Kentucky. Her dissertation was *Theory-based Corrections: An Investigation of the Process Involved in Correction for Racial Biases*.

After receiving her Ph.D., Dr. Voils worked for a consulting firm validating self-report measures for the pharmaceutical industry which sparked in her interest in health care research. “I became interested in the different topic areas the consulting firm covered and thought the health care research was interesting.” In seeking an opportunity to expand her interest, Dr. Voils says, “The diversity of the clinical and non-clinical faculty research interests here at HSR&D attracted me to the post-doctoral program.”

Dr. Voils is co-author of a number of articles and co-author of a number of papers presented at professional conferences. She is also a member of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

### Stewart Alexander, Ph.D.

Stewart Alexander, Ph.D., began his Office of Academic Affairs-funded Post-Doctoral Fellowship in November. His research interests are how the quality of communication during a medical encounter impacts short- and long-term outcomes for patients; how persons with chronic illness seek peer support; and the interaction between minority patients and the medical community. “Coming from an academic background,” says Dr. Alexander, “I’m looking forward to interacting with clinical investigators and learning more about the clinical environment.”

Dr. Alexander was particularly attracted to Durham’s post-doctoral fellowship program. “First and foremost, I wanted to work with Dr. James Tulsky. His research in doctor/patient communication is very appealing. I also felt that the Durham VA was a comfortable environment with chances to grow professionally in many directions with opportunities to work on some of my ideas with others.”

Dr. Alexander received a B.A. in Communications from Purdue University in 1989. He received a Masters in Library Science and an M.A. in Speech Communication from Indiana University, in 1991 and 1994, respectively. He received his Ph.D. in Speech Communication from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2002.

Dr. Alexander is a lead or co-author of a number of articles and conference papers. He also is a member of the Central States Communication Association, the International Communication Association, the International Network on Personal Relationships, and the National Communication Association.



Corrine Voils, Ph.D.

## Caregiver Burden and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders

Approximately twenty-two percent of Vietnam War veterans are thought to have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research shows that one third of all persons with PTSD fail to recover even after many years. Patients with chronic PTSD suffer significant difficulties, such as problems with family cohesion, self-disclosure, emotional and sexual intimacy, the expression of affection, hostility, and difficulty with aggression, which can severely impact social and occupational functioning.

There is increasing research evidence that caregivers for those with PTSD face many of the same burdens as those living with someone with a chronic illness such as Alzheimer's disease, including "crisis management, symptom management, social isolation, financial problems, and adjustment to the clinical course of the disease." In a recent study\*, Patrick Calhoun, Ph.D., along with Hayden Bosworth, Ph.D., and Jean C. Beckham, Ph.D., of the Durham VA Health Services Research, set out to examine the association between the PTSD symptom severity, caregiver burden, and the psychological adjustment in partners of veteran patients with PTSD.

"Consistent with previous research," says Dr. Calhoun, lead researcher for this study, "we found that partners of veterans with chronic PTSD experience increased burden and have poorer psychological adjustment compared to partners of combat-veteran patients without PTSD. We also found that among those women whose partners had PTSD, both PTSD symptom severity and level of interpersonal violence were strongly associated with the level of burden they reported. We found no evidence, however, that caregiver factors such as education, ethnicity, socio-economic status or access to greater social support changed the relationship between PTSD symptom severity and the experience of caregiver burden."

"Given that we continue to find a relationship between caregiver burden and partner psychological adjustment, I think this study highlights the need to develop effective behavioral interventions targeted at caregivers," says Dr. Calhoun. "The strong relationship between interpersonal violence and caregiver burden and adjustment also highlights the need for continued effort to develop safe and effective treatments for violence and aggression among veterans with PTSD."

\*Calhoun PS, Beckham JC, Bosworth HB. "Caregiver Burden and Psychological Distress in Partners of Veterans with Chronic Post-traumatic Stress Disorder" *Journal of Traumatic Stress* (June, 2002) 15(3):205-212.

## Obesity and Health-Related Quality of Life

In a study published in the October issue of *Obesity Research*,\* William Yancy, M.D., and his Durham VA research team found that male veteran outpatients from the Durham VA Medical

Center with a higher body mass index (BMI), or higher weight in relation to height, reported a lower health-related quality of life (HRQOL) compared to persons with normal BMI. Dr. Yancy and his colleagues also found that higher BMI is "most prominently associated with bodily pain," an association, the team determined, that "should receive more attention in clinical care and research."

Studies estimate that more than 60% of Americans are overweight or obese. Excess weight or obesity is associated with heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, gallbladder disease, and hyperlipidemia or high cholesterol, and is the second-leading preventable cause of mortality. But controlling for these comorbidities, Dr. Yancy and his colleagues noticed that the physical aspects of quality of life were affected by obesity. "We asked individuals about their day-to-day physical functioning, such as 'Do you have trouble going up and down stairs, doing daily housework, or other day-to-day activities, and how does your health affect those particular duties?' And we found that these physical aspects of quality of life were more affected by obesity," says Dr. Yancy. "This population had lower levels of quality of life in physical functioning, and specifically, in bodily pain." Dr. Yancy and his team also found that persons with lower levels of obesity or just mildly overweight had more bodily pain than people who were normal weight.

Before controlling for comorbid illnesses, the VA patients who were very obese had comparable or lower scores on certain aspects of quality of life compared with patients from other studies with congestive heart failure, arthritis, or hypertension. However, with this type of comparison (among different patient samples), it is unclear whether it was obesity or additional factors, such as lower socio-economic status or comorbid illness, that were associated with low health-related quality of life.

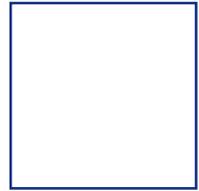
Unfortunately, problems associated with obesity are not given attention until diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes occur. "I think that obesity is not taken as seriously as it needs to be taken," says Dr. Yancy. "We don't have good medications for obesity, but we have great medications for high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. And when a clinician is faced with a patient with high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes, concerns about obesity are pushed to the side and not given the same importance as these other illnesses."

Dr. Yancy hopes that this research will stress to others the need for greater attention to obesity. "In our study, we controlled for comorbid illnesses and found that if you control for those, obesity still has a big impact on peoples' quality of life. I think this shows that obesity needs to be targeted a lot more aggressively."

\*Yancy WS, Jr, Olsen MK, Westman EC, Bosworth HB, Edelman D. "Relationship between Obesity and Health-Related Quality of Life in Men" *Obesity Research* 2002, October; 10(10): 1057-1064.



HSR&D  
VA Medical Center (152)  
508 Fulton Street  
Durham, NC 27705



## Research Update



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

---

---

### Faculty Publications

BISWAS, MS and BASTIAN, LA. "Risk Factors for Heart Disease Among Women: Communicating Probabilities of Disease" *Journal of Clinical Outcomes Management* 2002, June; 9(6):333-340.

BISWAS MS, CALHOUN PS, BOSWORTH HB, BASTIAN LA. "Are Women Worrying About Heart Disease?" *Women's Health Issues* 2002, July/August; 12 (4):204-211.

CALHOUN PS, Beckham JC, Feldman ME, Barefoot JC, Haney T, BOSWORTH HB. "Partner's Ratings of Combat Veterans' Anger" *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 2002, April; 15(2):133-136.

Westman EC, YANCY WS, Edman JS, Tomlin KF, Perkins CE. "Effect of 6-Month Adherence to a Very Low Carbohydrate Diet Program" *American Journal of Medicine* 2002, July; 113:30-36.

WHITED JD, Hall RP, FOY ME, MARBREY LE, GRAMBOW SC, DUDLEY TK, DATTA S, SIMEL DL, and ODDONE EZ. "Teledermatology's Impact on Time Intervention among Referrals to a Dermatology Consult Service" *Telemedicine Journal and e-Health* 2002, September/October; 8(3): 313-321.

Beckham JC, CALHOUN PS, Glenn DM, Barefoot JC. "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Hostility, and Health in Women: A Review of Current Research" *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 2002; 24(3): 219-228.

Heflin MT, ODDONE EZ, Pieper CF, Burchett BM, Cohen HJ. "The Effect of Comorbid Illness on Receipt of Cancer Screening by Older People" *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 2002; 50: 1651-1658.



*Research Update* is published by the Health Services Research and Development Service, Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Durham. For questions or comments contact Ed Cockrell, Administrative Officer, VAMC (152), 508 Fulton Street, Durham NC, 27705. Telephone: (919) 286-6936, Fax: (919) 416-5836. E-mail: COCKR001@mc.duke.edu Web Page: <http://hsrd.durham.med.va.gov/> The Institute's mission is to provide quality information on issues regarding the organization, financing, and delivery of veterans' health care, and to build the epidemiological capacity of the Veterans Health Administration through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of epidemiological information. The Institute also has a mission to educate health professionals through a spectrum of training grants in the techniques of health services and epidemiological research.