

ICER UPDATE

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HSR&D News

John D. Whited, M.D., M.H.S., Receives Advanced Research Career Development Award

Dr. John Whited has received the Advanced Research Career Development award from Health Service Research that will begin July 1. He is about to complete his three-year Research Career Development award (1998-2001).

Dr. Whited began his health services research career investigating diagnostic reliability among dermatologists when assessing patients for the presence or absence of skin cancer. This research eventually led him to investigate telemedicine applications for dermatology. He found that the diagnostic reliability and accuracy of teledermatology diagnoses were comparable to that of clinic-based diagnoses, which is the basis of his current project – to study the health services implications of a teledermatology consult system and to evaluate its impact on health care delivery.

Telemedicine can have a positive impact on the delivery of medical care specialties in the VA medical care system. Geographic barriers can hinder many veterans from the use of VA medical centers. The further a veteran resides from a VA medical center, the less likely he or she is to take advantage of VA services. VA clinic-based outpatient centers offer primary care services, but little in the way of on-site specialty services. Telemedicine can serve as a link between these outpatient centers and larger VA medical centers when the need for specialty consultation arises.

“The VA is becoming a leading user of telemedicine technology but has not systematically adopted telemedicine



John D. Whited, MD

and its infrastructure,” says Dr. Whited. “Building on my previous and current investigations, my future plans are to advance a telemedicine research agenda for the VA and to do this by developing strategic collaborations both within and without the VA.” One way he intends to reach his goal is to continue his collaborations between the VA and the Department of Defense that he has started to form, using the complementary strengths of each to achieve his goals.

Dr. Whited will investigate, in collaboration with the Department of Defense, how a functioning site-to-site teledermatology consult system influences clinical outcomes, quality of life, resource, utilization, and economic outcomes. A more long-term goal is to develop a reliable and valid telemedicine-specific satisfaction instrument. “In a more global sense, I would like to see the VA become a leader in promoting an evidence-based approach to telemedicine implementation,” says Dr. Whited. “And it is my desire to participate in the design and analysis of research studies that can help achieve that goal.”

The Role of Shared Governance

Can Nurses Govern in a Government Agency? This is the question Jacqueline Howell, RN, BSN, MPH and her nursing research group at the Durham VA Medical Center, posed in the title of a study published in the April issue of the *Journal of Nursing Administration* concerning the role of shared governance for professional nurses. Shared governance is a framework for develop-

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ing independent decision making in professional nursing practice, standards, policies, and procedures and is designed to enhance professional nursing practice, communication, professional collaboration, a positive work environment, quality decision making, and patient care outcomes. A shared governance model was implemented within the Nursing Service of the Durham VAMC in 1997. Through the study, Ms. Howell and her fellow researchers wanted to determine if a shared governance model, with its inherent decentralized approach, can function within the hierarchical structure of a VA hospital setting and to what extent is the functioning of a governance model related to nurse and setting characteristics.

Despite a clear movement to shared governance at Durham VAMC, the study found that full implementation of a shared governance model is limited because of federal regulations and laws within the VA healthcare system.

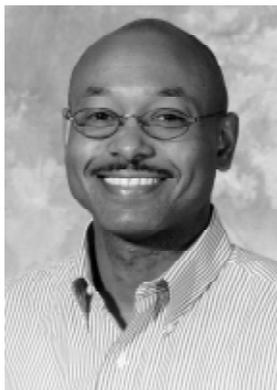
The result of the study, however, has broader implications. Ms. Howell states that, "as healthcare facilities become more consolidated and centralized, there will be a greater need to provide professional nurses with autonomy in professional practice. This is relevant to the recruitment and retention of professional nurses, especially in a tight nursing market, because shared governance promotes greater involvement and commitment."

Durham's HSR&D provided funding for the study, something that Ms. Howell says was very important. "HSR&D provided the funds for us to purchase the survey tool and pay a consultant to analyze the data. Without this funding, we would not have been able to move forward. We greatly appreciate their support of our nursing research endeavors."

Center News

Mark East, MD, Completes Two-Year Fellowship

Dr. Mark A. East, who began his Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality-funded MD Fellowship with Durham's HSR&D Service in July, 1999, will be completing the fellowship at the end of June. Dr. East is a cardiologist and the focus of his research for the last two years has been medical outcomes by race among patients with cardiovascular disease.



Mark A. East, MD

Regarding his experience for the last two years in the fellowship program, Dr. East feels that the program has been very valuable to him. "The most important thing I received from the program was the support. I felt like I was part of a family here. I feel that Dr. Oddone, the faculty and staff strive to create an atmosphere that's nurturing and very supportive. Second of all, I was given resources, funding to attend national meetings, funding for coursework, and funding for books and supplies. That was incredibly valuable. But there were many valuable factors and it's been a real blessing for me to be a part of it."

Dr. East is also working on his Masters in Clinical Investigation through the Duke Clinical Research Institute. He still has two years remaining on a cardiology fellowship at Duke University.

Once that is completed, his plan is to pursue a career in research and academia and feels that his experience in the MD Fellowship program will help him reach his goal. "This program has allowed me to pursue my academic interests," says Dr. East, "and it will help position me for an academic career."

Pre-Doctoral Fellow Corinne Auman Begins Research

The Durham Center for Health Services Research in Primary Care would like to welcome Corinne Auman, M.S. as a new candidate of the Pre-Doctoral Fellowship Program. Ms. Auman is a Ph.D. candidate in developmental psychology at North Carolina



Corinne Auman, MS

State University. She received her M.S. in psychology from North Carolina State University in 2000 and her B.A. in psychology from Elon College in 1997. Ms. Auman's area of research is the stereotyping of older adults and its impact on their emotional and physical health. Her dissertation title is "Stereotype Threat Influence on Patients in a Veterans Care Facility." Her research will specifically examine the relationship between stereotype threat and patient functioning in veterans health care facilities. Hayden Bosworth, Ph.D., is acting as her mentor.

Stereotypes about any group have the potential to affect the group members' performance in a number of settings. How other individuals view a person's health status has the potential to influence how the individual sees him or her self and, subsequently, impacts their health.

Personal perceptions of health may also influence behaviors such as adherence to treatment regimen or medical visits. An illness can be a demoralizing process

for an individual due to the routine treatment that they may receive from health care staff during treatment. Illness may also be demoralizing for patients who feel that encounters with medical staff are opportunities to be stereotyped due to their illness, invoking feelings of helplessness, loss of control, and a loss of independence.

Older adult patients often have to deal with stereotypes of illness and age. Past research has shown health care workers treat patients differently based upon age. How these stereotypes are expressed in an elderly patient's everyday life varies widely. "Individuals who hold negative aging stereotypes may deal with them with disdain, aversion, or neglect, or through compassion, emphasizing care for the elderly due to their frailty and helplessness. Both stereotypes reinforce the

assumption that aging is a process of decline and does not accurately represent the diversity of the adult population," says Ms. Auman.

These stereotypes may hinder older patients from seeking medical care they need. "If older adult patients know the potential exists to be viewed in this negative light when seeking medical treatment," says Ms. Auman, "they may be influenced to delay treatment or avoid it all together."

And when they do seek help, older adult patients, unlike younger patients, may not recover from illness quickly or may not recover their former health at all, thus compounding stereotypes that can have greater negative impact on their health and recovery.

Through her study, Ms. Auman seeks to gain an understanding of the implications of stereotype threat for health, behavior, and recovery of patients. She anticipates completing her Ph.D. in May 2002, and then hopes to teach and conduct research in an academic setting.

Ph.D. Level Statistician Wanted

The ICER is seeking a Ph.D. level biostatistician. The candidate should be a self-starter motivated to learn new analysis techniques as needed. The selected individual will work with a team of investigators implementing health services research projects, assist in preparation of grant proposals, develop analysis plans for a variety of studies, write manuscripts jointly with a team of investigators, perform research in applied statistical methodology, and collaborate with an experienced team of masters and Ph.D. level statisticians. It is anticipated that the candidate will receive an academic appointment in the Department of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics at the Duke University Medical Center.

The position requires a Ph.D. in statistics/biostatistics or related field, substantial experience with SAS and/or Splus, excellent communication skills, strong organizational abilities, and basic consulting experience. Desired qualifications include some knowledge of relational databases such as Microsoft Access, experience consulting with medical and health services researchers, basic knowledge of physiology or other health-related science and experience with observational studies. New Ph.D. graduates are encouraged to apply.

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Recent Articles by Our Researchers

BOSWORTH, HB. [Editorial Comment] "Health-Related Quality of Life After Stroke: A Comprehensive Review" Stroke 32(4):972, (April 2001).

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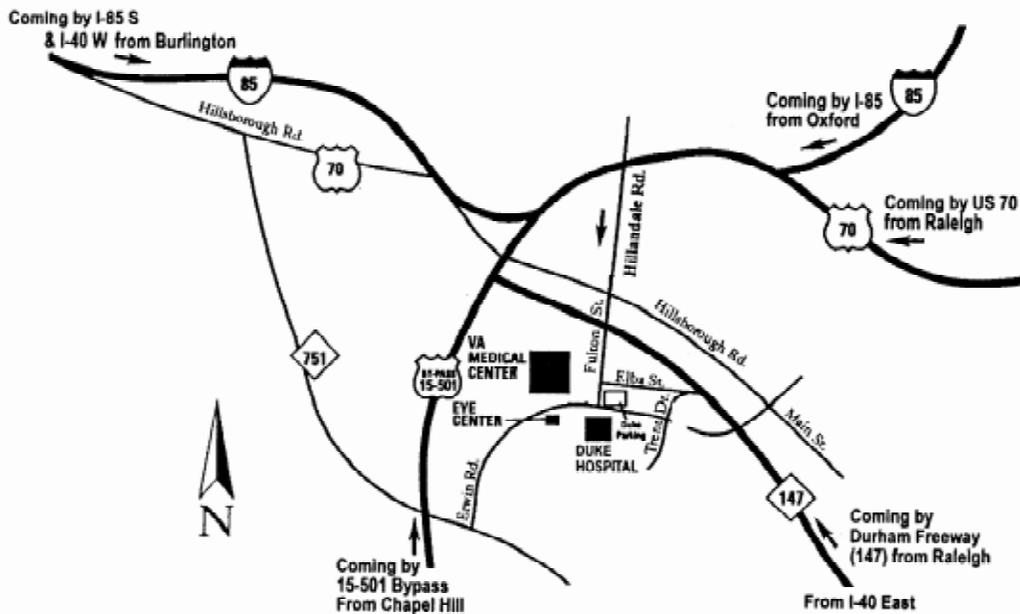
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The Institute's mission is to provide quality information on issues regarding the organization, financing, and delivery of veterans' health care, and to build the epidemiological capacity of the Veterans Health Administration through the generation, 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.