

ICER

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Center News

James Tulsky, M.D., to Lead Study of Interactive Voice Response on Patient-Centered Care Outcomes

Primary care patients often have unspoken concerns when they visit primary care physicians, including anxieties about the cause, seriousness, or prognosis of their problem, or expectations of what the physician will do at the clinic visit. However, increasing time constraints on visit lengths and the complexity of patients' chronic medical problems may make physicians less likely to elicit a patient's concerns. As a result patient concerns and expectations are often missed by the physician. Observational studies indicate that unmet expectations adversely affect adherence to therapy, satisfaction, and other patient-centered outcomes that are becoming very important to VA Medical Centers.

To address these issues James Tulsky, M.D., will act as the Principal Investigator for the three-year funded study, "Can Interactive Voice Response Improve Patient-Centered Care Outcomes." Jaya Rao, M.D., who originally conceived and initiated this study but is now with the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, will act as the co-investigator. Begun October 1, this study is exploring how computer technology can enhance physician awareness of the concerns patients have about their treatment so that the issues can be addressed in a timely way. Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is a novel computer technology which allows individuals to answer questions using a touch tone telephone and has recently been extended to health care for screening and monitoring purposes. However, IVR has never been evaluated as a method to elicit the pre-visit concerns patients would like their physicians to address. The objective of this randomized controlled trial is to evaluate whether using IVR to elicit primary care patients' pre-visit concerns and expectations can improve physician/patient communication and thus improve patient-centered

outcomes, such as health-related quality of life and satisfaction.

Prior to their scheduled clinic appointments, potentially eligible patients will be mailed a letter describing the study, and research assistants will approach the patients at their appointment to describe the study, invite participation, and obtain informed consent. Those providing consent will be randomized to usual care or the IVR. Intervention patients will be asked to provide information on their concerns and expectations through the IVR. This information will then be provided to the physician just before the patient's clinic visit. The primary outcomes, to be obtained at 6 and 12 months by blinded study personnel, include satisfaction with care, health care utilization, health-related quality of life, and unmet expectations.

Lesa Hall-Young and Medical Media

When you see any of the Durham VA's posters, slide presentations, banners, and brochures there's a good chance that Lesa Hall-Young, graphic artist for Durham's medical media department, had a hand in their creation.

Lesa's position is supported entirely through local research funds and as a result, Lesa says, her first priority is to projects requested by employees in research: "Because of the workload demands, I do research's work first and foremost, they are my primary client. If a conflict arises, research gets priority."

Three years ago, Eugene Oddone, M.D., director of HRS&D, wanted the department's posters and

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presentations to have a more professional look. He asked Medical Media what was needed to improve Durham's graphics capability. The answer was a large-format poster printer that was purchased by HSR&D -- and, says Lesa, it's been a phenomenal success. Some researchers have said they feel they have received funding because their presentations look so good. One doctor told Lesa that the research he had done was pretty ordinary, but the visual impact of the poster presentation was just so positive that it contributed significantly to the funding of his research project.



Lesla Hall-Young

Lesla's work for HSR&D can be quite varied. "I've done illustrations for journal publication, presenting the graphs and data in an attractive manor, putting together electronic poster presentations, imaging slide presentations clients bring me on a disk, or helping them format a slide presentation." Slides, as a mechanism for presentation, are increasingly being replaced with electronic formats. "People can now use a data projector to project data right from their laptop onto a screen. Fewer and fewer people are using slides unless they're going to other countries or places that do not have a data projector. Traditional slides are used less and less and electronic formats are becoming the norm."

Lesla says she has done work for probably every department within the hospital, and their interests and requirements are diverse. Much of the hospital's role in patient care relies increasingly on patient education and Lesla's work for the hospital — in the form of posters, banners, and brochures — targets the patient population. "I've created banners for the incoming walkway, signs that help navigate patients through the hospital, signs alerting patients and employees about flu shots, and signs for employees and patients for upcoming events," says Lesla. "I'm a promotion and PR department. I design the advertisements for the hospital; I design the advertisements for the nurse recruiting want ads, brochures for research studies and patient education, and departmental poster presentations."

Some of her work requests come from outside the Durham VA hospital, some as far away as Connecticut, Texas, and St. Louis. "I occasionally get requests from former Durham VA employees who've moved to other VAs who want our work. We'll usually exchange work for replenishing us with supplies." There are also requests for work from our local VISN 6 office and Employee Education Services as well as VA facilities within our VISN area, such as Salisbury, Asheville, and Beckley.

Our hats are off to Lesla. She is an excellent example of a dedicated worker who adds value to both the medical care and research mission of the VA.

M.D. Fellowships for Summer 2000

The Center welcomes our four new research fellows, as of July 2000: Mimi S. Biswas, M.D.; Joseph A. Coladonato, M.D.; Deborah A. Fisher, M.D.; and Mitchell T. Heflin, M.D.

Each year The Center supports healthcare professionals interested in fundamental questions about the structure, process, and effects of healthcare services that can be used to improve the VA medical care system. Programs in two-year medical and one- and two-year pre- and post-doctoral fellowships are offered to promising investigators to develop their applied research, clinical, and/or teaching skills in health services research methods while working closely with one or more VA faculty mentors. Fellowships are funded through the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Academic Affairs, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Mimi S. Biswas, M.D.

Dr. Biswas has a VA-funded fellowship with the Durham HSR&D Services. Her interest is in women's health issues, preventive health, and cardiology. She will be mentoring with Lori Bastian, M.D.

Dr. Biswas received her B.S. in Biology from California Institute of Technology in 1993 and her M.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine in 1997. She did her internship and residency in Internal Medicine at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles from 1997 through 2000.



Mimi S. Biswas, MD

Joseph A. Coladonato, M.D.

Dr. Joseph Anthony Coladonato comes to HSR&D as an AHRQ Fellow. His interest is to pursue an academic career in nephrology with a focus in clinical research. He will be mentoring with William F. Owen, M.D.

Dr. Coladonato received a B.A. in Biology in 1991 from the University of Pennsylvania and his M.D. from the Jefferson Medical College, in Philadelphia, in 1995. He did his internship and residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh from 1995 through 1999.

There he was Chief Medical Resident during the 1998-99 year. Dr. Coladonato also received a Best Clinical Teacher Award in 1998. He began in June 1999 a three-year fellowship training in Nephrology at Duke University



Joseph A. Coladonato, MD

Medical Center which he expects to complete in June 2002. He is also enrolled in Duke University's Clinical Research Training Program as a Master in Health Science candidate, expecting to graduate in May 2002.

Dr. Coladonato is an associate member of the American Society of Nephrology and an associate member of the Renal Physicians Association.

Deborah A. Fisher, M.D.

Dr. Deborah A. Fisher is an AHRQ Fellow. Her interest is in gastroenterology and her long term goal is a career in academic medicine. She will be mentoring with Dawn Provenzale, M.D.

Dr. Fisher received her B.S. in Molecular Biology, graduating Summa Cum Laude, from Vanderbilt University in May 1992, where she also received the Phi Beta Kappa award in 1991. She continued in Vanderbilt, receiving her M.D. from its School of Medicine in May 1996. While there, Dr. Fisher received a Diabetes Research & Training Center Fellowship award. She did her internship and residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, from 1996 through 1999. She began a fellowship in Gastroenterology at Duke University Medical Center in June 1999.

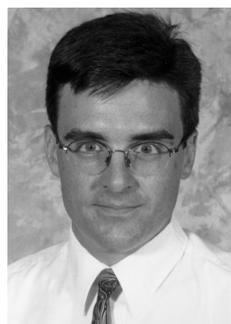


Deborah Fisher, MD

Dr. Fisher is the co-author of two articles. She is also a member of the American Gastroenterological Association and the American College of Gastroenterology.

Mitchell T. Heflin, M.D.

Dr. Mitchell Heflin, comes to us on a VA-funded HSR&D fellowship. His primary area of research interest is screening and prevention in the elderly.



Mitchell Heflin, MD

He is specifically interested in the impact of comorbid illness on providers' decisions to offer cancer screening and patients' decisions to participate. Dr. Heflin says he is currently looking at comorbid illness as a predictor of receipt of cancer screening in persons participating in the Piedmont Health Survey of the Elderly, a National Institute on Aging sponsored longitudinal study. He is also interested in the use of electronic resources for educating

primary care providers about Geriatric Medicine. He will be mentoring with Eugene Oddone, M.D. and Harvey Cohen, M.D.

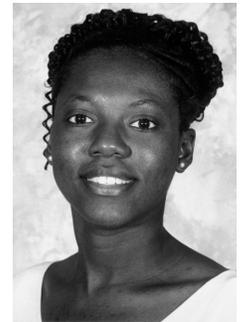
Dr. Heflin received a B.A. in Russian Studies from Princeton University in 1990. He received his M.D. from the University of Virginia School of Medicine, graduating in May 1994, where he was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha. He did his internship and residency in Internal Medicine at Duke University Medical Center from 1994 to 1997. He performed a Division of Geriatrics Fellowship at the Duke University Medical Center from 1998 to 2000. He is currently enrolled in Duke University's Clinical Research Fellowship as a candidate for a Masters of Health Sciences.

Introducing Na Keya Hardin and Isabel Reddy, New Research Assistants

The Center would like to welcome two new, full-time research assistants, Na Keya Hardin and Isabel Reddy. Both Ms. Hardin and Ms. Reddy will be working with James Tulsy, M.D. as research assistants.

Ms. Hardin graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. in English in 1998 and an M.A. in English in 1999 from North Carolina A&T State University. After graduation she was a Pre-Curriculum English Instructor at Wake Technical Community College from 1999 through 2000.

Ms. Reddy, who has a B.S. in Human Development from the University of Vermont, previously worked for HSR&D as a Research Health Science Specialist from 1990 – 1992. Since that time she has been a training director for the Clinical Trials Support Services in the Research Triangle Park, was the owner and director of the Early Childhood Education Center in Durham, a professional development consultant, and a therapeutic teacher for the Durham Public Schools.



Na Keya Hardin



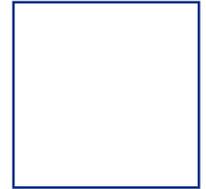
Isabel Reddy

Recent Articles by Our Researchers

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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.