

Complementary and Integrative Health Evaluation Center (CIHEC)

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

Improving Veteran & employee health through evidence-based CIH therapies

Since 2017, CIHEC has been evaluating the implementation of evidence-based complementary and integrative health (CIH, a core Whole Health component) therapies and the effectiveness of novel CIH therapies as non-pharmacological options for Veteran/employee health. Results are disseminated using five CIHEC national dissemination strategies. CIHEC addresses five VA priorities, and operations partners at several levels use CIHEC's results to inform their strategies and facilitate CIH implementation.

CIHEC Evaluates the Implementation of Evidence-Based CIH Therapies and the Effectiveness of Emerging CIH Therapies as Non-Pharmacological Options to Improve Health

Pain, anxiety and depression are prevalent among Veterans. The evidence of effectiveness for certain CIH therapies for these and other conditions has mounted, such that eight CIH therapies are part of the standard VA medical benefits package. However, VA medical centers often need support in implementing these therapies. Also, novel CIH therapies continue to emerge, such as Battlefield Acupuncture or virtually-delivered meditation, for which there is limited evidence of effectiveness.

In partnership with Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT), CIHEC addresses these twin issues by examining both the implementation of evidence-based CIH therapies as well as the effectiveness of novel CIH therapies. CIHEC's Director (Stephanie L. Taylor, PhD) and Co-Director (Steve Zeliadt, PhD and A. Rani Elwy, PhD in 2017-2018), with researchers and staff at six VA HSR&D Centers, have conducted nine projects since 2017:

- 1) Effectiveness and Implementation of Battlefield Acupuncture
- 2) Adoption and Implementation of CIH Therapies
- 3) National Survey of Veteran Interest in, Use of and Satisfaction with CIH Therapies
- 4) The Environmental Scan of CIH Provision at VAMCs Nationally
- 5) Evidence Map of CIH for Pain
- 6) Managing OPCC&CT's Veterans' CIH Experience Survey
- 7) Data Nexus and its *Compendium on Use of Complementary and Integrative Health Therapies and Chiropractic Care at the VA*
- 8) Resiliency Mindfulness for Clinician and Staff Burnout
- 9) Getting the Word Out: Disseminating the Evidence on CIH Therapies (detailed below)

Partners: CIHEC works with 23 partners at the VACO, VISN and VAMC levels.

VA Priorities: Given CIH therapies are a main component of Whole Health, CIHEC addresses: 1) the VHA's Plan for Modernization (10 Lanes of Effort), 2) the 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), 3) the 2018-2024 VA Strategic Plan; 4) the Mission Act; 5) the 2020 Veteran Mental Health Care Improvement Act; and 6) the 2020 Whole Veteran Act, all which call for studies of the provision or effectiveness of CIH therapies.



CIHEC's Dissemination Tools

In our project "Getting the Word Out: Disseminating the Evidence on CIH Therapies", we developed and/or manage five national dissemination tools to foster CIH implementation and research in the VA: 1) *Library of Research Articles on Veterans and Complementary and Integrative Health Therapies and Chiropractic Care*, 2) *Registry of Current Research on Veterans and Complementary and Integrative Health Therapies and Chiropractic Care*, 3) HSR&D CIH Research cyberseminars, 4) HSR&D CIH Research listserv, and 5) we served as Guest Editors of supplements of one of the leading health services research journals, *Medical Care*, to showcase research on CIH therapies and Veterans.

CIHEC's Key Impacts/Dissemination Activities

Dissemination Activities

5 most important briefings or testimonies: 1) Creating Options for Veterans Expedited Recovery (COVER) Commission, 2019; 2) National Leadership Council, 2019; 3) VISN Directors, 2019; 4) VISN Chief Medical Officer National Call, 2019; 5) Office of Inspector General, 2020

Publications and Media: 1) 20 non-VA conferences/meeting presentations = 20; 2) 11 journal publications; 3) 27 articles on national media outlets; 130 mentions in social media

5 Most Important Impacts

1) Responding to Congress Regarding the CARA Legislation in 2019- Results from our 1) national survey on Veterans' use of/interest in CIH and 2) environmental scan of VAMC's CIH provision were presented to the COVER Commission, which was appointed as part of VA's response to the CARA legislation to update Congress on the VA's expansion of and research on CIH therapies.

2) Informing VACO and VISN Leadership on Veterans' Interest in and Use of CIH – In 2019, we briefed several types of VA leaders on the results of our national Veteran survey on CIH use and interest, including the National Leadership Council, VISN Directors and VISN Chief Medical Officers.

3) OPCC&CT's Field Implementation Team (FIT) Training- The VA OPCC&CT is using CIHEC's results to educate and arm their national FIT members with information on a) the evidence for and b) how to best implement CIH therapies. FIT members regularly liaise with VAMCs' Whole Health team to support their CIH/Whole Health implementation.

4) The September 2020 *Medical Care* Journal Supplement on CIH in the VA - *The Implementation of Complementary and Integrative Health Therapies in the Veterans Health Administration*, (Taylor and Elwy were Guest Editors), received widespread publicity. *Medical Care's* press release was picked up by 27 news outlets and the *American Journal of Public Health* blog, and they tweeted it repeatedly over four weeks (69 tweets) and posted it on LinkedIn. Our *Medical Care* Fact Sheet was sent throughout the VA, including to VACO (e.g., in the "*Executive in Charge of Hot List*") and to Whole Health/CIH Program Leads and clinicians via the OPCC&CT listserv. HSRD's CIDER featured it in the September "Research News". The Editor of the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (the leading CIH research journal in the world), featured it in his blog and newsletter.

5) 2018 Invited Symposium at International Complementary and Integrative Health Conference – The CIHEC team was invited to give a symposium with the VA OPCC&CT at the premier international complementary and integrative health conference in 2018 on six of our projects. This conference is attended by leaders in the field, and the VA is considered to be the leader in CIH provision in the world.

