

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 2016, CIHEC has evaluated 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 seven VA priorities, and operations partners at several levels use CIHEC's results to inform their strategies and aid 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 tele-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 Executive Director (Stephanie L. Taylor, PhD), Director (Diana J. Burgess, 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 fifteen projects since 2016:

- 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) Getting the Word Out: Disseminating the Evidence on CIH Therapies
- 7) Data Nexus
- 8) Resiliency Mindfulness for Clinician and Staff Burnout
- 9) Evaluation of Tele-Whole Health Effectiveness and Implementation
- 10) Managing OPCC&CT's Veterans CIH Therapy Experience Survey
- 11) Evaluating the Long-Term Effects of Repeated Battlefield Acupuncture
- 12) Addressing Primary Care Providers' Perceptions of Massage Therapy
- 13) Understanding Primary Care Providers' Perceptions and Knowledge of CIH Therapies
- 14) Yoga Implementation Evaluation Survey
- 15) Analysis of the Veterans CIH Therapy Experience Survey.

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

VA Priorities: CIHEC examines the implementation of evidence-based complementary and integrative health (CIH) therapies and the effectiveness of novel CIH therapies, all to offer Veterans non-pharmacological treatment options and to offer employees resilience programs. Given CIH therapies are a key component of the Whole Health transformation, CIHEC addresses several VA/QUERI priorities: 1) the VA Under Secretary for Health's priorities, 2) the 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), 3) the 2022 - 2028 VA Strategic Plan, and 4) the 2020 Whole Veteran Act, all which call for studies of the provision or effectiveness of CIH therapies.

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EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE

CIHEC's Dissemination Tools

In our project “Getting the Word Out: Disseminating the Evidence on CIH Therapies”, we developed/manage four national dissemination tools to foster VA CIH implementation and research: 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, and 4) The VA CIH Research listserv.

CIHEC's Key Impacts/Dissemination Activities

Dissemination Activities

5 most important briefings or testimonies: 1) OPCC&CT's April 2023 briefing to Senator Sanders, Chair of the HELP Committee (Health, Education, Labor, Pension), who is using our CIHEC results to develop a plan for scale up of CIH/Whole Health services across U.S.; 2) OPCC&CT's April 2022 briefing to House MILCON Committee VA Budget Briefing on CIH provision and effectiveness; 3) OPCC&CT and CIHEC's (Taylor's) November 2021 and February 2022 briefings to Chairman of House Veterans Affairs Committee, Representative Takano, on CIH provision and effectiveness; 4) OPCC&CT's 2019 briefing to Congressional commission “Creating Options for Veterans Expedited Recovery (COVER)” on CIH research, provision and effectiveness; and 5) CIHEC's 2019 briefing to VA National Leadership Council, 2019

Publications and Media: 1) 34 non-VA conferences/meeting presentations; 2) 28 journal publications; 3) 30 articles on national media outlets; 220 mentions in social media; and about 25,000 views

5 Most Important Impacts

1) Informing Congressional Bodies – We, along with OPCC&CT, have presented our work on CIH effectiveness and provision to several congressional members, such as Senator Sanders, as Chair of the HELP Committee (Health, Education, Labor, Pension), who is heavily drawing on our work to develop a plan for scale up of CIH/Whole Health services across U.S.; Senator Gillibrand (2023); Representative Takano, Chair of Veterans Affairs Committee (2021, 2022); the House MILCON Committee VA Budget Briefing (2020).

2) Responding to Congress Regarding the CARA Legislation in 2019 – Results from our national survey, Veterans' Use of and Interest in CIH Therapies, and the results from our Environmental Scan of CIH Provision at VAMCs across the nation were presented to the Creating Options for Veterans Expedited Recovery (COVER) Commission in 2019. This Commission was appointed as part of the VA's response to the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) legislation to periodically update Congress on the VA's expansion of and research on CIH therapies.

3) Informing VACO and VISN Leadership on Veterans' Interest in and Use of CIH – For the past several years, OPCC&CT has very regularly presented our work (as do we) to almost all VA Offices and other VA leadership, including the National Leadership Council, VISN Directors VISN Chief Medical Officers, and the OPCC&CT Strategic Advisory Group. Most recently, given CIH/Whole Health transformation is the Under Secretary for Health's priority, OPCC&CT now briefs him quarterly using CIHEC results.

4) Informing the National Academies of Medicine 2023 report on Whole Health – This report is based in part on our work and is getting national recognition. It has been presented to Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid, several Senators, and others.

5) Informing VA Clinicians Nationwide – OPCC&CT also continues to use our data on a) the evidence for and b) how to best implement CIH, as part of Whole Health, to inform many groups of clinicians and implementation support staff across the nation. For example, they regularly use our work in their national CIH Provider and Field Implementation Team trainings, their staff trainings, presentations to VA Addictions Scholars, people working on the Pain Echo Program, to name a few.

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