GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH

Rotation Co-Coordinators:

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Training Locations:
Jamaica Plain Campus – 4 days
Brockton Campus – 1 day

Number of Interns: 2

~ Overview ~
The General Mental Health rotation provides opportunities for interns to obtain clinical training in multiple outpatient mental health programs affiliated with the General Mental Health Program at VA Boston. These include the General Mental Health Clinic (GMHC), Mood and Anxiety Disorders Clinic (MADC) at the Jamaica Plain and Brockton campuses, Primary Care Behavioral Health Clinic (PCBH) at Jamaica Plain, and Urgent Care Clinic (UCC) at Jamaica Plain. These clinics offer a broad array of services to veterans with mental health difficulties throughout VA Boston Healthcare System and provide interns with ample opportunity to work with a wide range of patients. GMH interns are encouraged to engage in program evaluation research, or in any of the multiple ongoing, federally-funded research studies as part of their scholarly inquiry (research) activities. The General Mental Health rotation will accept two interns for the 2019-2020 training year. The GMHC provides evidence-based evaluation, differential diagnosis, psychotherapy, and psychopharmacology as well as treatment referrals to mental health specialty clinics. The GMH Clinics at Jamaica Plain and Brockton serve a diverse population of men and women, ranging in age from 18 to 90, representing a variety of races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, family structures, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Patients in GMH present with a wide range of mental health problems, from those with simple bereavement and/or adjustment issues to severely impaired, multiply-diagnosed individuals who are unlikely to be appropriate for mental health specialty clinics. Below we describe the GMHC and its association with several specialty clinics, including the MADC, PCBH, and UCC. These clinics provide interns with a balance of general and specialty training.
~ Training Objectives ~

The activities of the GMH interns are similar to those of a staff psychologist in GMH. The training objectives include developing competency in:

- Conducting in-depth psychological **assessments** and related reports, with a focus on **diagnosis** and case disposition. Further, over the course of the rotation, interns are trained in thorough **risk assessment**.

- Developing strong **case conceptualization** skills for a broad range of patients with a variety of complex presentations, to inform treatment planning.

- Displaying increased mastery in the delivery of **individual and group psychotherapy** within a variety of clinical settings. The interns will develop and implement treatment plans for mood, anxiety and other broad ranging disorders.

- Effectively engaging in **interprofessional** treatment teams. The GMHC houses a large staff composed of psychiatrists, social workers, clinical nurse specialists, suicide prevention coordinators, case managers, and psychologists. Trainees in the GMHC include psychology interns and post-doctoral fellows, social work interns, and psychiatry residents. The exposure to diverse staff with a variety of theoretical approaches and supervisory styles is designed to assist interns in developing their own professional identities and perspective informed by scientific data. Trainees will develop expertise and confidence in clinical case presentation and interprofessional communication in weekly team meetings and twice-monthly case conceptualization meetings.

- Demonstrating professional growth in areas of **ethical, legal, and cultural issues** related to both clinical and scientific activities.

- Engaging in **research** activities through the GMHC (primarily program development/evaluation projects) or through collaboration with researchers throughout the VA Boston system.

- Interns may also have the opportunity to develop **supervisory skills** by engaging in supervision of externs (when available) or other trainees and receiving supervision of supervision.

~ Clinical Experience ~

The General Mental Health rotation includes four mental health clinics described below. Some additional options may be available as programs evolve. Assignments include involvement in at least three of the four following programs:

► **General Mental Health Clinic:** The primary focus of the GMHC is the provision of services to veterans with a variety of psychological disorders who could benefit from
time-limited treatment. The GMHC also houses the Mood and Anxiety Disorders Clinic (MADC). The MADC provides evidence-based, state-of-the-art evaluation, psychotherapy (individual and group), and psychiatric services for mood and anxiety disorders. Treatment in both the GMHC and MADC is geared toward reducing symptoms and distress, strengthening skills and coping resources, and improving psychosocial functioning and quality of life. A variety of theoretical approaches to treatment are utilized, including cognitive-behavioral, behavioral, acceptance-based, interpersonal, psychodynamic, and systems, with a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice. Psychometrically-validated pre- and post-treatment assessment instruments are also used to evaluate treatment outcome.

SUPERVISORS – JAMAICA PLAIN: ANTHONY ANNUNZIATA, PH.D., WILLIAM BOWE, PH.D., DIANA FITEK, PH.D., STEPHEN LANCEY, PH.D., AMY LAWRENCE, PH.D., ELIZABETH RYAN, PH.D., AND SARAH WEINTRAUB, PH.D.

SUPERVISORS – BROCKTON: SHIMRIT BLACK, PH.D. LOIS KRAWCZYK, PH.D., AND ELIZABETH RYAN, PH.D.

Integrated Primary Care Behavioral Health: The PCBH clinic offers co-located, collaborative behavioral healthcare within primary care. The intern will receive training in a full range of duties and responsibilities typical of primary care behavioral health providers. These include brief psychosocial assessment, consultation and liaison with primary care providers, triage and/or brief treatment of veterans with a broad range of clinical conditions who present to primary care (e.g., depression, anxiety, trauma, chronic pain, insomnia, adjustment to chronic illness, poor control of chronic disease, poor adherence to treatment regime or suggested lifestyle modifications, substance use disorders). Evaluation and treatment in the PCBH is necessarily brief, with a focus on identifying key issues of concern to the primary care patient and on improving functioning, rather than on symptom remission. Standardized self-report measures inform the clinical assessment. The intern will learn to develop and carry out brief, evidence-based behavioral treatment plans (e.g., cognitive behavioral treatment, motivational enhancement). Communication and liaison with the Primary Care team is essential. The intern will develop proficiency in providing individual consultation to primary care staff on behavioral health issues and management of risk. The intern may also have the opportunity to conduct joint visits with medical staff or residents.

SUPERVISORS – JAMAICA PLAIN: KRISTIN GREGOR, PH.D., NORA KEENAN, PH.D., AND RISA WEISBERG, PH.D.

SUPERVISOR – BROCKTON: SHELBY ZUCKERMAN, PSY.D.

Urgent Care Clinic: The Urgent Care Clinic provides a unique opportunity for closely-supervised experience in crisis management and assessment of risk for suicide and/or other violence. It also provides exposure to patients with a broad range of psychopathology, including both acute (e.g., suicide and homicide ideation, acute psychosis, alcohol/substance use requiring detox) and sub-acute symptoms. This experience is based on a model emphasizing training in three major areas: knowledge, skill, and attitude.

SUPERVISOR: PHILLIP KLEESPIES, PH.D., ABPP
Assessment: Interns on the GMH rotation have multiple opportunities to strengthen their skill in diagnosis and assessment. Interns conduct intake assessments, with a focus on differential diagnosis, risk assessment, and case disposition. GMHC and MADC diagnostic assessments typically occur during a single session, but complex patient presentations may require additional meetings. Interns will learn to conduct evaluations using semi-structured diagnostic interviews relevant portions of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-V (SCID-5), and appropriate questionnaires (e.g., PHQ-9, PCL-5) as guided by the referral question and/or presenting complaint. GMHC assessments are typically broad in scope, including diagnostic assessment, initial treatment planning, and often consultation with the referring clinician. In contrast, PCBH assessments typically last 15 to 50 minutes, and focus on identifying key issues of concern for the primary care patient, with real-time liaison with primary care staff. Similar to PCBH, but in an acute (often high-risk) setting, training in the UCC provides experience in rapid assessment, risk assessment and management, and interdisciplinary consultation.

Intervention: Interns are actively involved in the provision of both individual and group psychotherapy, with a focus on short-term, problem-focused interventions. Interns will co-lead one or more psychotherapy groups with staff members and/or other trainees, typically using flexibly-administered, manual-based treatments. The following groups are offered through the clinics on a regular basis:

- **Anxiety Group:** This 10-session group is based on cognitive-behavioral principles and treatment components, including psychoeducation, cognitive reappraisal, and exposure to feared and avoided physical sensations and situations.

- **Depression Group:** This 10 session group utilizes a cognitive-behavioral approach to management of depression. The group is aimed at reducing depressive symptoms and improving psychosocial functioning, and incorporates treatment components such as behavioral activation and cognitive restructuring.

- **Anger Management Group:** This 10 session group provides treatment for veterans with anger management difficulties. Utilizing a cognitive-behavioral approach (with the opportunity to incorporate basic mindfulness techniques), the group is aimed at improving patients’ understanding and regulation of anger responses.

- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Group:** This ongoing, trans-diagnostic psychotherapy group introduces the core principles and skills (mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance) covered by Linehan’s treatment.

- **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT):** This 10-session group introduces ACT-based skills, including mindfulness meditation, to help alleviate
suffering and improve quality of life. ACT-consistent metaphors and experiential exercises are used to help veterans relate to internal experiences with a stance of acceptance and willingness, identify their core values, and commit to values-consistent goals.

- **Stress and Coping Group**: This ongoing skills-based group introduces cognitive-behavioral stress management skills and relaxation techniques to veterans with a range of presenting complaints and biopsychosocial stressors.

### ~ Intern Assignment ~

Both interns will train in the GMHC and MADC. One intern will train in Urgent Care and one will train in Primary Care Behavioral Health. Both interns will spend four days per week at the Jamaica Plain campus (GMHC, MADC, and either UCC or PCBH) and one day per week at the Brockton campus in the GMHC/MADC. The Brockton Campus is approximately 25 miles south of Boston. Intern assignments will be made with consideration for the needs and interests of the intern, in order to augment and broaden the intern’s clinical experience.

### ~ Instruction ~

Interns participate in weekly, one hour interprofessional team meeting and a twice monthly, one hour case conceptualization meeting in JP. Interns participate in a monthly one hour interprofessional clinic team meeting and a monthly, one hour case conceptualization meeting in Brockton. The intern assigned to PCBH will also participate in a monthly, one hour Primary Care meeting on the West Roxbury campus. In addition to these meetings, there are multiple opportunities for interns to engage in informal case consultation with staff members and other trainees.

### ~ Supervision ~

Interns will be assigned to a primary supervisory psychologist, as well as multiple additional supervisory psychologists across the clinics. The primary supervisor will be responsible for supervision of some individual therapy cases, and will also be available for consultation on professional and career development issues. Interns are assigned to supervisors in this manner to ensure that the number of individual (one on one) hours is met or exceeded, and to provide exposure multiple theoretical orientations and clinical styles. In addition to individual supervision, interns may participate in group supervision (2-3 trainees) that includes trainees at different levels of experience. Each intern will receive at least two hours of individual supervision per week in Jamaica Plain, one-half to one hour per week of individual supervision in Brockton, and one-half hour of group supervision for each group they co-lead. Interns will also receive case consultation from the postdoctoral psychology fellow training in the GMH fellowship program. Case consultation is provided under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist who maintains clinical and legal responsibility for the case.
~ Training in Supervision ~
Occasionally, the GMH rotation offers training in the delivery of clinical supervision. This typically involves interns providing clinical consultation to practicum students on one to two cases during the eight-month rotation. Interns then receive supervision of this “supervision” from a licensed staff psychologist. Interns meet weekly with the supervisor to address the issues that emerge for each of the supervisees.

~ Research ~
Interns may collaborate with VA Boston staff on any number of funded clinical research projects, which will provide opportunities for involvement in professional presentations and preparation of empirical and review manuscripts. Interns are encouraged to identify research activities that would expand their current skill set. Within GMH, Dr. Barbara Kamholz is actively involved in program development and evaluation regarding CBT training, including CBT training for psychiatry residents.

Level of intern research involvement during the rotation may vary based on interest level, available resources, and training needs. Interns may choose to participate in an ongoing clinical research study, assist with program evaluation activities relevant to the clinic, or independently propose and conduct a study under staff supervision. Intern candidates are encouraged to contact supervisors who share similar research interests to learn of the most current opportunities.

► Selected recent publications from our staff (highlighted):


