WOMEN’S TRAUMA RECOVERY TEAM

Rotation Coordinator:  EVE DAVISON, PH.D.
Psychology Service (116B)
VA Boston Healthcare System
150 South Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA  02130

Telephone:  (857) 364-4012
Email:  eve.davison@va.gov

Training Location:
Jamaica Plain Campus

Number of Interns:  1

~ Overview ~

The Women’s Trauma Recovery Team (WTRT) is located at the Jamaica Plain campus of VA Boston Healthcare System. WTRT is a recovery-oriented outpatient mental health program specializing in the assessment and treatment of PTSD and other trauma-related and comorbid disorders in women Veterans, and it is affiliated with the Women’s Health Sciences Division of the National Center for PTSD. Interns in WTRT receive extensive training and experience with evidence-based assessment and psychotherapies for PTSD and other problems that can result from experiencing trauma. Additionally, interns receive training and experience with full-model Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) within WTRT’s DBT track for women Veterans presenting with borderline personality disorder and/or significant emotional and behavioral dysregulation. Interns also participate in research with staff in the Women’s Health Sciences Division.

Many of the women Veterans seen in WTRT are served by multiple programs and providers and have complex treatment needs that benefit from close interdisciplinary care coordination. As a result, interdisciplinary teamwork is emphasized in our program.

Interns on our rotation conduct their clinical work within WTRT but work closely with staff of VA Boston’s other women’s mental health programs, in particular TRUST House, a therapeutic transitional residence program in Jamaica Plain for women Veterans with trauma- and substance-related problems. WTRT interns also collaborate with medical staff of the Women Veterans Health Center and with social work staff in VA Boston’s large Homelessness Program.

At the beginning of every rotation, WTRT interns – along with other WTRT trainees and trainees on Jamaica Plain’s PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) and Center for Returning Veterans (CRV) and Brockton’s Trauma and Addiction Recovery rotations – attend a series of didactics through the National Center for PTSD. The didactics include presentations on and training in:
• Use of the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS-5)
• Clinical issues in PTSD assessment
• Personality and personality disorder assessment
• Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
• Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
• Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE)
• Written Exposure Therapy (WET)
• Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
• PTSD and substance abuse treatment
• Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

~ Clinical Experience ~
Interns who match with WTRT will receive training in the following broad areas:

► **Treatment:** Interns participate in WTRT’s comprehensive psychotherapy program designed to address the complex trauma histories and clinical profiles with which our women Veterans present. Interns learn skills in providing treatment to women Veterans in evidence-based individual and group psychotherapies. Treatment in WTRT focuses on PTSD as well as on a wider range of clinical issues, such as: borderline personality disorder and difficulties with emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness; effects of military sexual trauma; sequelae of intimate partner violence; other disorders common in trauma survivors such as substance use disorders, eating disorders, major depression, and serious and persistent mental illness; comorbid medical problems such as chronic pain syndromes; experiences of discrimination and marginalization that interact with trauma-related symptoms; housing and employment problems.

WTRT Interns learn Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) through a two-day workshop at the start of the training year and through weekly consultation group participation. Our interns also receive training in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), which is provided both through foundational training at the beginning of the internship year as well as through weekly didactics provided in conjunction with participation on VA Boston’s DBT consultation team. As mentioned above, WTRT offers full-model DBT, and interns provide individual DBT, co-lead DBT skills training groups, and provide telephone consultation (during regular workweek hours) to DBT clients while on rotation with us. Beyond CPT and DBT, interns are exposed to a variety of theoretical orientations and approaches to treatment during their time here, and have the opportunity to learn and apply additional evidence-based psychotherapies, such as: Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE); the DBT-PE integrated protocol for comorbid BPD and PTSD; Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and other mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches; Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR).
The intern who completes their eight-month, major rotation with WTRT will have the opportunity for a training experience of both greater depth and greater diversity. For example, they might have the opportunity to co-lead different or additional groups from those they led during their first four months. Alternatively, they might become more expert in leading the same groups they co-led before. Matching with WTRT for their major rotation also affords interns the chance to treat a greater number of patients with complex presentations, some of whom may benefit from longer-term work.

**Assessment:** Women Veterans new to WTRT are sometimes provided comprehensive psychological assessments in order to more effectively plan for treatment. Multiple methods are used to gather information (e.g., chart review, structured clinical interviews, psychological and personality tests). In addition to the provision of these multi-session, comprehensive assessments, interns have the opportunity to conduct briefer, one-session intake assessments during their time on this rotation.

**Team Meetings:** Interns are an integral part of WTRT’s interdisciplinary treatment team meeting, which is held weekly and allows us to more closely coordinate care for our Veterans. Team meetings also afford our interns additional opportunities outside of supervision to discuss challenges in their clinical work, and to receive support and input from other team members. Our team meetings are attended by psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers, as well as by trainees from all three disciplines. WTRT interns also join VA Boston’s weekly DBT consultation team, which is comprised of staff and trainees from several mental health programs in our medical center.

**Consultation:** WTRT interns provide consultation and liaison to primary care and specialty medicine. WTRT works closely with – and shares the VA’s Program of Excellence designation with – VA Boston’s Women Veterans Health Center, one of the first women’s preventive and primary care centers in the VA system. Interns work with the multidisciplinary medical staff of the Center to offer integrated care to our shared Veterans, and they attend the Center’s monthly team consultation meetings. Supervision is provided to interns on methods of effective consultation within a medical center.

~ Supervision ~

Each WTRT intern is assigned a primary supervisor and at least two secondary supervisors, and supervision teams are comprised of both WTRT clinical staff and Women’s Division research staff psychologists. In addition, interns often receive supervision from their group co-therapists. The primary supervisor is responsible for collaboratively designing an individualized training plan that meets the specific needs of each intern, and is also the formal evaluator of the intern’s progress in the program. Interns also receive consultation through their participation in weekly CPT group consultation and DBT consultation teams.
~ Selection Criteria ~

The successful applicant to WTRT will have demonstrated interest and/or experience in one or more of the following areas: PTSD/trauma-focused assessment and treatment; women’s issues; DBT. Prior training in or exposure to evidence-based cognitive behavioral therapies is strongly desirable, as is appreciation and enjoyment of a collaborative, team-based approach to patient care. Given the diversity of our patient population, past clinical, research, and/or advocacy work in multicultural issues and competency is extremely beneficial and pertinent to our rotation.

~Research ~

Interns have the opportunity to become involved in ongoing research activities in the Women’s Division of the National Center for PTSD, and are allotted between four and eight hours per week of research time. An intern’s level of research involvement can vary from a limited role in an ongoing project, up to and including the design and implementation of their own small project. Current projects in the Women’s Division are supported by a range of intramural and extramural grants. Decisions about extent of research involvement typically are based on an intern’s interest and available time (e.g., phase of dissertation), as well as their individual training needs. These decisions are made in consultation with the intern, the intern’s primary supervisor, and other supervisors and staff.

Research involvement can take many forms on the WTRT rotation. Interns may, for example, choose to participate in an ongoing clinical research study; assist with program evaluation activities relevant to the clinic; collaborate on policy-oriented work; or independently propose and conduct a small study under staff supervision. Intern candidates are encouraged to contact supervisors who share similar research interests to learn of the most current opportunities.

► Currently funded research in the Women’s Division includes:


- Eating Disorders in Veterans: Risk, Resilience, and Service Use (recommended for funding). Principal Investigator: Karen Mitchell, Ph.D. Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research and Development Merit Award.

- Effectiveness of a Unified Transdiagnostic Treatment in Routine Clinical Care. Principal Investigator: Cassidy Gutner, Ph.D. National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health career development award.

- An Electrophysiological Predictor of SSRI Response in Veterans with PTSD. Principal Investigator: Suzanne Pineles, Ph.D. VA Clinical Sciences Research and Development.
• Intimate Partner Violence, Health, and Health Care Among Female Veterans. Principal Investigator: Katherine Iverson, Ph.D. Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research and Development Career Development Award.

• Neurobiological and Psychological Benefits of Exercise in Chronic Pain and PTSD. Principal Investigator: Erica Scioli, PhD. VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Career Development Award Career Development Award

• PTSD-Related Neurobiological Mediators of Negative Pregnancy Outcomes. Principal Investigator: Yael Nilini, Ph.D. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development career development award.

• Variable Length CPT for Combat-related PTSD. Principal Investigators: Patricia Resick, Ph.D. and Jennifer Wachen, Ph.D. Department of Defense.

• The Veterans Metrics Initiative: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being. Principal Investigator: Dawne Vogt, Ph.D. VA Health Services Research and Development.

• WoVeN: A Peer Support Network for Women Veterans. Principal Investigators: Tara Galovski, Ph.D., and Amy Street, Ph.D. Walmart Foundation

► Selected recent publications from our staff:


