According to a 2001 World Health Organization (WHO) cross-cultural study that examined 18 of the most stigmatized conditions, drug and alcohol addiction were the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 4\textsuperscript{th} most stigmatized conditions\(^1\). Stigma has been cited as a major reason why patients with substance use disorders delay, and/or avoid, treatment\(^{ii}\). Three types of stigma have been described: self-stigma, characterized by negative feelings toward oneself, maladaptive behaviors and stereotype endorsement which may prevent one from seeking addiction treatment; social stigma, the endorsement of stereotypes about those with addiction by large social groups via the use of slang terms; and structural stigma, the policies and procedures of institutions that may be manifest in providers’ reluctance or refusal to prescribe medication-assisted therapies\(^{iii}\). Unfortunately, while addiction stigma and its related harms may be well described, little attention has been given to interventions to confront addiction stigma. Education interventions, contact strategies and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)\(^{iv,v}\) have been used and studies have demonstrated promising short term outcomes. Long term outcomes of interventions regarding addiction stigma may be more difficult to achieve.

CHESS (Changing Healthcare to Eradicate the Stigma of Substance Use Disorders) is a quality improvement initiative designed to target each type of stigma. Our mission is to support Veterans, healthcare providers, and members of the community in promoting awareness of addiction stigma through education, recognition and recruitment strategies to improve stigmatizing attitudes and enhance the lives of those affected by addiction. To the best of our knowledge, CHESS is the first addiction stigma awareness campaign of which participants include members of each of the affected social groups (Veterans, providers and members of the community), as well as the first designed to intertwine their respective roles and responsibilities. Despite the lack of evidence for such an approach, our design integrates two strategies with evidence of success. The first of these is providing education to all three social groups about addiction stigma and requiring each participant to subsequently educate another person. Addiction and mental health education studies have produced promising short term outcomes among each of the aforementioned social groups individually. Secondly, recognition is a strategy widely used by corporate America as it has been shown to improve team culture and performance; this will be implemented by rewarding participants upon their completion of each task.
CHESS will be introduced in three phases, all following a similar step-wise approach. Starting with a brief stigma education lecture on 1/27/17, attendees had the option to join CHESS as a member of the “Public.” These participants will then progress through each level (from “Pawn” to “King” or “Queen”) by completing assigned tasks designed to target social and structural stigmas. Following this initiation period, “Providers” will complete tasks designed to target self and structural stigmas and “Patients” will complete tasks designed to target all three types of stigma. Each of the three groups will engage in tasks to recruit additional participants. Upon joining, each member becomes a “Pawn” and will receive a key ring with a pawn charm. As participants complete each task, they will receive a charm of the corresponding chess piece, until they’ve earned five and have become a “King” or “Queen.”

To learn more and help us promote CHESS please visit and “Like” our Facebook page by typing the URL [fb.me/ChessSUD](http://fb.me/ChessSUD) into your internet browser, via Google search “@ChessSUD” or by searching “Changing Healthcare to Eradicate the Stigma of Substance Use Disorders” in Facebook.

---


---

**Reminders**

**Monthly Directors’ Calls:** 3rd Wednesday of each month from 2:00PM-3:00PM EST  
**Monthly Fellows’ Curriculum Calls:** 1st Wednesday of each month from 2:00pm-3:30pm EST  
**National Calls:** [vaww.mentalhealth.va.gov/omhs-natconcalls.asp](http://vaww.mentalhealth.va.gov/omhs-natconcalls.asp)  
**National ATCC Sharepoint Site:** [goo.gl/662Ttb](http://goo.gl/662Ttb)  
**Fellowship Website:** [www.pittsburgh.va.gov/Trainee/ATF](http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov/Trainee/ATF)
Meet the New Fellows

**Name:** Naomi Holt

**Location:** William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, Madison

**Specialty:** Neuropsychology & Tobacco Use

**Background:** I earned my Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology at Midwestern University in Downers Grove, IL. My clinical internship was completed at the William S. Middleton Memorial Hospital in Madison, WI. Clinical training was focused in neuropsychology, geriatrics, general mental health, PTSD, and addiction. My dissertation topic was evaluating the effectiveness of a treatment program for individuals with ADHD.

**Fellowship Started:** October 2016

**Career Direction and Desires:** I wish to pursue a career in neuropsychology and would like to work in a hospital setting.

**Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests:** It is important for patients to understand how addiction can affect thinking skills and vice versa. There appears to be a need for more research looking at the connection between cognition and addiction, especially in the geriatric population.

**Recent Presentations, Publications or Projects:** I am beginning a project examining the prevalence of different alcohol use and tobacco use patterns in those with normal cognition, those with Mild Cognitive Impairment, and those with a dementia diagnosis from the University of Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center (ADRC) study. I also hope to develop a training protocol for researchers in the ADRC to teach them how to refer research participants to alcohol and tobacco cessation programs.

**Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development:** This fellowship has aided me in learning more about the current research that is being conducted on addiction and figuring out what questions still need to be answered. I am thankful for the great opportunities to learn and work with leaders in addiction research.

**Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important:** The interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship helps me to collaborate and change my research questions to make them more relevant to other disciplines.
**Name:** Andrew Naglich

**Location:** VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas

**Specialty:** Addiction Psychopharmacology

**Background:** Graduated from University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Pharmacy 2014

Pharmacy Practice Residency: Stormont-Vail Healthcare 2015

Psychiatric Pharmacy Practice Residency: Western Missouri Psychiatric Pharmacy Residency Program 2016

Current position: Dallas Addiction Leadership Training Program, Advanced Pharmacy Fellow

**Fellowship Started:** August 2016

**Career Direction and Desires:** Faculty appointment with research-focused clinical practice in addiction treatment

**Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests:**

*Career focus:* Advancing pharmacist involvement in addiction treatment research through pharmacy based research and provision of clinical and educational services

*Research Interests:* Disorders of executive function

Pharmacological treatment of dually diagnosed patients

Evidence based analysis of addiction treatment literature

*Administrative interests:* Integration of pharmacy students and residents into addiction treatment practice setting

**Recent Presentations, Publications or Projects:** Systemic review of combined therapeutic modalities for treatment of alcohol use disorder

Therapy in practice review of treatment for patients with bipolar disorder and alcohol use disorder

Analysis of a residential rehabilitation program treatment outcomes

Analysis of hippocampal volume data in a large population cohort

**Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development:** The fellowship provides a variety of opportunities for involvement with research, quality improvement, and leadership. The mentorship provided to me by the program and its affiliates gives me the opportunity to work with experienced researchers to learn about research design and implementation, conduct meaningful data analysis, and relate the findings to practice in a clinical setting.

**Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important:**

Interdisciplinary interactions in the fellowship have been particularly beneficial for me in the initial portion of my fellowship. My interaction with the other fellows in the program continually provides insight into a variety of practice areas as well as exposure to interdisciplinary approaches to problem solving in the realm of addiction treatment. The interdisciplinary approach of the fellowship has also provided me many opportunities to enhance my own knowledge of addiction research and capitalize on the knowledge of experienced mentors and other fellows who have backgrounds different and complimentary to my own.
Name: Angela Petersen

Location: VA San Diego Healthcare System

Specialty: Implementation of best practices for smoking/tobacco cessation in health care settings

Background: I was trained in biopsychosocial perspective of substance use disorders and intentional behavior change. I studied co-occurring disorders in graduate school which led to a specific interest in the effects of tobacco use on behavioral health populations. As a project coordinator, I managed a grant for creating intervention materials and a training curriculum for smoking cessation in behavioral health settings across Maryland. I developed an interest in how to improve training models for teaching cessation skills focused on affecting knowledge, attitudes, and ultimately practices of providers.

Fellowship Started: September 2016

Career Direction and Desires: I have an interest in developing effective training curricula for VA health care staff and disseminating these curricula throughout VA healthcare systems. I would eventually like to assist the office of Tobacco and Health Policy in Clinical Public Health with dissemination and implementation efforts of best practices for cessation.

Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests: My career focus is currently developing research examining how to effectively teach health care providers how to better implement best practices. I’m working to build my publications in the area of implementation related to tobacco cessation to better facilitate a successful application for an early career award. I’m currently piloting a multi-component training program within primary care clinics and hope to use the data to inform a larger study examining components of curricula most related to implementation.

Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development: I find I’m having more opportunities than I could have hoped for to collaborate with other researchers in my areas of interest, to develop my own research path, and to improve in areas I had hoped as an advanced trainee. I’m pleased with having the time to write publications, but also with finding I have the space and time to find how I work best in a primarily research focused position.

Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important: Given my interest in disseminating best practices and translating research into training curricula, it is absolutely necessary for me to interact with health care providers of all specialties and backgrounds. Any opportunity to continue having exposure to working with different types of providers is an opportunity for me to grow and improve. This also continues to inform my research efforts in hearing other professionals’ perspectives of Veterans’ experiences and health care efforts. More broadly, I think that this fellowship is allowing me to apply my behavioral medicine background more than ever and is helping me to find my role as a psychologist in an integrated health care system.
Name: Timothy J. Sowicz

Location: VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Specialty: Nurse practitioner (family medicine), registered nurse

Background: Registered nurse since 2001 and nurse practitioner since 2010. Have worked in a variety of acute and primary care settings. Finished PhD in 2016. Grew up in Philadelphia and have practiced in Boston, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, and Wilmington, DE.

Fellowship Started: September 2016

Career Direction and Desires: Following fellowship, a tenure-track faculty appointment at a research intensive university.

Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests: Varied research interests including 1) patient-provider interactions and communication around sensitive topics such as sexuality, substance misuse, etc.; 2) Risk assessment and risk mitigation to prevent unwanted outcomes for health and wellness; 3) provider decision-making; 4) shared treatment decision-making; 5) health disparities; 6) naturalism (qualitative inquiry). I also am passionate about teaching and mentoring and continuing my clinical practice.

Recent Presentations, Publications or Projects:

Submitted application (Dec. 2016) for small grant to Sigma Theta Tau International (honor society for nursing) to explore patients’ responses to participation in an opioid use review clinic;

Submitted an abstract (Dec. 2016) of my dissertation study to Sigma Theta Tau’s research meeting (Summer 2017, Dublin, Ireland);

Preparing application (Due Feb. 2017) to participate in the Emerging Nurse Scholars Forum (Spring 2017, University of Toronto)


Invited talk: Taking Stock: Creating Choice through Education & Teaching (Bloomsburg University of PA, March 2017)

Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development: Provides opportunities to collaborate with clinicians and investigators with a wide variety of experience, expertise, and interests (both in Pittsburgh and nationally). Access to lectures, talks, and continuing education opportunities related to content and research methods. Exposure to investigators and clinicians who are prominent in academe and professional circles. Allows me to explore new areas for my scholarship and clinical practice (e.g. addiction science).

Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important: As a nurse I have always practiced on interdisciplinary teams so the fellowship is a natural extension of that. I am also a firm believer in the saying, “You don’t know what you don’t know.” Interacting with professionals from a variety of fields allows me to consider varying disciplinary lenses when thinking about clinically-relevant research questions. It is also important to learn with and from others with different disciplinary and world views.
Name: Becky McCarthy
Location: VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Background: PGY1 Pharmacy Residency at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (2015-2016)
Pharmacist at CVS Pharmacy (2013- Current)
Duquesne University Mylan School of Pharmacy (2013)

Fellowship started: July 2016

Career Direction and Desires: To become a clinical pharmacist in an addiction clinic

Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests: Primary interests include addiction stigma and alcohol use disorder

Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development: The fellowship has given me the opportunity to explore addiction anti-stigma interventions, which has resulted in the development and implementation of my addiction stigma awareness campaign. It has also enabled me to pursue clinical work in the Center for the Treatment of Addictive Disorders (CTAD) which includes leading medication information groups and performing medication reconciliation for CTAD-enrolled veterans. Furthermore, I’ve had opportunities to co-author manuscripts regarding trends in opioid prescriptions at retail pharmacies and am pursuing Board of Pharmacy Specialties (BPS) certification in pharmacotherapy.

Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important: Given the different experiences and perspectives among varying healthcare professionals, working within an interdisciplinary team provides us an opportunity for growth and refinement of our own practice.

Name: Michel A. Philippe
Location: VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas
Specialty: Correctional and Forensic Populations
Background: Clinical Psychology

Fellowship Started: September 2016

Career Direction and Desires: To become a clinical psychologist with a breadth and depth of knowledge in Post-Incarceration Syndrome

Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests: Clinical work with veterans who face legal interventions

Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development: Adds research experience to my resume

Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important: Provides a variety of experiences and insight into different topics/aspects
Name: Curtis Bone
Location: West-Haven VA
Specialty: Addiction Medicine
Background: Family Medicine Physician
Fellowship Started: November 2016
Career Direction and Desires: Academic Medicine
Career Focus, Education, Administration or Research Interests: Teaching, Research and Clinical Care
Recent Presentations, Publications or Projects:

Ways the fellowship contributes to your professional development: This fellowship has already greatly contributed to my professional development. To start, my colleagues and mentors are completely inspiring and the learning community established by the fellowship is ideal for facilitating national collaborations. Finally, the formal leadership training delivered through the fellowship is invaluable. The concepts and skills delivered by national experts within the VA system are clearly essential to develop into an effective problem-solver and leader, however they were not discussed in my undergraduate medical, nor through graduate medical training. The inter-professional fellowship is clearly unique and I feel extremely fortunate to take part in it.

Why you feel that the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship is important:
Although general medical physicians, scientists, social workers, nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists are trained in silos with very specific skill sets, the human body and societal constructs develop and degenerate in ways that permeate the artificial boundaries placed on our respective disciplines. An inter-professional approach to problem-solving ensures that multiple perspectives are brought into the conversation when approaching the complex twenty-first century issues that face our patients and our nation. Training in a multi-disciplinary fellowship facilitates collaboration, communication and understanding between fields; I believe the relationships forged in this fellowship through shared experiences and interdisciplinary training will lead to a future in which bridges to health are built with a more complete perspective and reinforced by the strengths of multiple disciplines. In short, I believe this fellowship is a living model of the change that needs to take place throughout our graduate medical education system.
Recent Fellow Publications

Below is just a portion of recent publications by our current and past fellows. A full list of publications and presentations will be available on the website. http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov/Trainee/ATF/


Haibach JP, Ashley HL, Tate RD. A Wellness Group in VA Pittsburgh’s Acute Care Inpatient Psychiatric Unit. Pittsburgh, PA: US Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Pittsburgh Healthcare System; May 2016.


Becker WC; Merlin JS; Manhapra A; Edens EL. Management of patients with issues related to opioid safety, efficacy and/or misuse: a case series from an integrated, interdisciplinary clinic. Addict Sci Clin Pract. 2016 Jan 28;11(1):3


Recent Fellow Publications (cont)


Addiction Medicine Subspecialty Updates


“Today the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM) and The Addiction Medicine Foundation (TAMF) are announcing a major step forward in the integration of the field of Addiction Medicine into routine medical practice. Starting in the fall of 2017, ABPM will offer more than 850,000 physicians who are certified by a Member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) the opportunity to become certified in the subspecialty of Addiction Medicine. ABMS-certified physicians who subspecialize in Addiction Medicine have expertise in the prevention, evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of persons with the disease of addiction, of those with substance-related health conditions, and of people who show unhealthy use of substances including nicotine, alcohol, prescription medications and other drugs.”
Interprofessional Advanced Fellowship in Addiction Treatment

This 2-year, multi-site fellowship provides interdisciplinary research, clinical, and educational training to prepare physician, post-doctoral, and post-masters level fellows as leaders in the field of addiction treatment.

Our fellows represent a variety of disciplines including medicine, psychology, nursing, pharmacy, and social work. They share a commitment to reducing the burden of alcohol and drug use disorders in Veteran populations.

Our seven local sites offer unique training opportunities and are linked through a common interdisciplinary addictions curriculum and opportunities for cross-site collaboration. Visit the Coordinating Center website (www.pittsburgh.va.gov/Trainee/ATF) or contact any of the seven sites to learn more.

**Boston**
John Renner, MD (John.Renner@va.gov)
Deborah Brief, PhD (Deborah.Brief@va.gov)

**Dallas**
Jamylah Jackson, PhD, ABPP (JamylahK.Jackson@va.gov)
Bryon Adinoff, MD (Bryon.Aadinoff@va.gov)

**Madison**
Jessica Cook, PhD (Jessica.Cook2@va.gov)
Randall Brown, MD (Randall.Brown3@va.gov)
Ashley Snyder, MSW (Ashley.Snyder4@va.gov)

**Pittsburgh**
Karin Daniels, PhD (Karin.Daniels@va.gov)
Adam Gordon, MD (Adam.Gordon@va.gov)

**San Antonio**
Michael Dawes, MD (Michael.Dawes@va.gov)
Troy Moore, PharmD (Troy.Moore3@va.gov)

**San Diego**
Tamara Wall, PhD (Tamara.Wall@va.gov)
Scott Matthews, MD (Scott.Matthews@va.gov)

**West Haven**
Ismene Petrakis, MD (Ismene.Petrakis@va.gov)
Steve Martino, PhD (Steve.Martino@va.gov)
Ellen Edens, MD (Ellen.Edens@va.gov)
David Pilkey, PhD (David.Pilkey@va.gov)