

Liver Disease & HIV Residency Program

Program Overview & Mission

The Veterans Health Administration is the largest single provider of HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) care in the United States. Veterans with these medical conditions often have mental health and substance use treatment needs. Addressing the significant psychiatric needs of these patient populations promotes health, wellness, and successful treatment and disease management. The Liver Disease & HIV Residency provides the opportunity to receive quality training in Health Psychology with a particular emphasis on working with these complex patient populations.

The Liver Disease/HIV Residency position is focused on the effective, independent, and ethical mental health treatment of individuals with Liver Diseases (including HCV), and HIV. Our aim is to train psychologists who are able to accurately diagnose patient problems; implement evidence-based treatments; consume with sophistication the clinical research literature and incorporate new findings into clinical practice. Residents receive specialty training in HIV, hepatitis C, advanced liver disease, as well as dedicated training in substance use assessment while working on integrated care teams to assess and address the mental health needs of patients living with HIV, HCV/HIV co-infection, HCV mono-infection and advanced liver disease. We expect training experiences will foster a deep understanding of the relationship between psychiatric disorders and these special medical conditions, and how the effective recognition and treatment of mental disorders can improve the care of HIV -infected veterans and those with HCV and advanced liver disease. The psychiatric disorders include those caused by HIV/HCV as well as preexisting disorders that complicate the treatment of HIV/HCV.

Based on a practitioner-scholar model, where clinical work and research complement each other, the program helps trainees become expert clinicians focused on complex mental health needs of patients with HIV and HCV and other Liver Diseases and provides them exposure to clinical/programmatic research. The Liver Disease/HIV resident has the ability to devote up to 20% of the training year to research/program evaluation activities. In addition, due to the high level of substance use co-morbidity in these patient populations, the resident devotes a minimum of 10% of the training year to focused training in substance use disorders through the Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program (SARP).

Clinical Training Settings

The Infectious Diseases Clinic is an interdisciplinary primary care clinic that serves veterans with HIV, LIVER DISEASE/HIV co-infection and tuberculosis. Fellows provide integrated mental health services in this clinic that range from brief assessment & triage, consultation with medical providers and individual and group psychotherapy to address a range of presenting concerns including: medication adherence, sexual risk reduction, stress management, and other health management skills such as smoking cessation, insomnia & weight management. Residents also address general mental health concerns that may arise, such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. The ID service also fields consults related to pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV

(PReP) and residents are actively involved in HIV education and prevention efforts throughout the hospital.

The Liver Clinic is a specialty clinic that provides treatment of hepatitis C and manages veterans with advanced liver diseases. The resident serves as a member of this specialty team and meets with veterans in collaboration with the medical providers to aid in the identification to potential challenges to treatment, provide brief interventions & refer to specialty mental health as appropriate. Through both the Liver and ID clinics, the resident aids in assessing veterans readiness for HCV treatment and provides treatment support as needed. Residents also have the opportunity to participate in the Liver Transplant Evaluation process.

The Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program (SARP) is an outpatient drug treatment program that uses a multidisciplinary team to treat Veterans with alcohol and drug addictions. As there is considerable prevalence of substance use disorders within the HIV and HCV patient populations, the fellow devotes a minimum of 10% of clinical training time in a focused substance use training experience. This is usually completed as a minor rotation within the SARP clinic, and may involve both individual and group therapy experiences depending on the fellow's training goals. Residents also serve as liaison between the ID and Liver Clinics and the SARP program and work on initiatives related to HIV and HCV patient education projects.

Didactic Training Experiences

Residents have 2-4 hours weekly of didactic training. This includes specialized trainings in the areas of Trauma, Geropsychology and Neuroanatomy, a monthly ethics seminar, a monthly professional development series and weekly Health Psychology Seminar Series along with presentations by staff from throughout the Psychology Service.

Specialty Didactic Training

The Liver Disease/HIV resident at the DC VAMC is one of ten nationwide residents participating in this specialized training. As part of participation in the National Liver Disease/HIV Residency program, the resident attends weekly didactic webinars on topics relevant to HIV, Liver Disease and integrated mental health care, in order to provide structured training in these topic areas. The resident also attends monthly conference calls with the national program coordinator and other fellows to discuss training progress, clinical topics and to develop a sense of community and cross-site collaboration. The Liver/HIV Resident also has access to the HIV/HCV program's sharepoint site which provides the opportunity to share resources with residents at other VAs nationwide. Finally, the resident has the option to attend other national calls related to HIV and Liver Disease management that include both medical and mental health providers.

Research/Program Development & Evaluation Training

As part of the training year, residents may devote up to 20% of their time to research/program development & evaluation projects. Residents work closely with their mentors to develop ideas for projects that are feasible to complete within the training year. This may include contributing to a manuscript, conducting a small independent research study, or development of a new clinical initiative and evaluation of its impact. Throughout the year, residents meet with members of the Research Subcommittee of the Training committee to review progress towards RPDE goals, learn about specific aspects of the research progress (e.g. funding sources, IRB review, budget development, etc.)

Other Activities

Additional activities include: supervision of psychology practicum students and interns, attendance at mental health service staff meetings and ID clinic/Liver Clinic/SARP team meetings, presentation of clinical cases to DCVAMC psychology staff for collaborative discussion, and completion of appropriate online courses through the VA national HIV/AIDS website (<http://www.hiv.va.gov/web-resources/education.asp>).

Clinical Mentorship

The Washington DC VA Medical Center Psychology Training Program is committed to the professional development of trainees during their current career development. As part of this commitment, the program encourages the use of both formal and informal mentoring by its trainees.

Fellows will meet with their Clinical Mentor at least one (1) hour per month to begin the Fellowship year and are encouraged to continue this regular schedule of meetings throughout the Fellowship year; however, this may be reduced as the year progresses and will be mutually decided by the Clinical Mentor and the Fellow.

FELLOWSHIP SUPERVISORS

Leah Squires, Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist, HIV/ Liver Psychology

Leonard Tate, Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist, SARP

Additional Staff

Howard M. Schulman, Ph.D., Chief of Psychology, DCVAMC, Clinical Psychologist

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