

QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative

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CIHEC

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Overview

Complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches such as acupuncture, mindfulness meditation, and yoga are important safe, non-pharmacologic options to improve health with few side effects. The provision of evidence-based CIH approaches is a national priority for the VA healthcare system and is part of the 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA). The Complementary and Integrative Health Evaluation Center (CIHEC) overarching goal is to improve Veterans' health and experiences of care through increased availability and use of evidence-based CIH approaches.

Methodology

CIHEC investigators are conducting four projects:

- Veteran Preference for and Utilization of CIH collected data on Veteran demand for, use of CIH approaches, and barriers to that use via the Veteran Insights Panel of 3,200 Veterans.
- Environmental Scan is an online survey of all CIH approach program leads in VA to learn details of what, when, where, and by whom CIH is being delivered, as well as what implementation barriers they face.
- PRIMIER-I is testing two strategies for the electronic collection of CIH-related patient reported outcomes (PRO) to inform VA's Office of Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation's (OPCC&CT) implementation blueprint for collecting PRO data nationally.
- Battlefield Acupuncture (BFA) is examining the effectiveness of VA's Pain Management Program's auricular acupuncture protocol (BFA) on pain—and barriers and facilitators to its implementation.

Findings and Anticipated Impact

Veteran Preference for and Utilization of CIH: In the past year, 23% of Veterans in this study used massage therapy, 20% used chiropractic, 18% used meditation/mindfulness, 13% used yoga, 11% used progressive relaxation, and 9% used acupuncture. More than half were interested in trying/learning more about each of the six CIH approaches, but face many barriers. Pain and stress reduction were the most frequent reason for using CIH. In addition, investigators found that the majority of Veterans are unaware of the CIH approaches that already exist at their local VA facilities. These results could be used to improve both local marketing and provision of evidence-based CIH approaches.

Environmental Scan: Preliminary data from 150 sites representing more than half of VA medical centers and 60+ community-based outpatient clinics show that sites offered an average of 5.4 CIH approaches, with the most common being relaxation techniques, yoga, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, meditation, and Tai chi. National survey results will help OPCC&CT understand how CIH approaches are being offered—and how they can be implemented better across VA. The database of all VA CIH program leads that have been generated will facilitate communication across those leads and OPCC&CT.

Battlefield Acupuncture: Preliminary results show BFA reduces pain. However, given that BFA is a new protocol, BFA-trained providers face several implementation barriers and offer a few strategies to overcome those barriers. CIHEC QUERI will share these findings widely. OPCC&CT can use this information to address some implementation barriers and foster the training of additional BFA providers. This is another example of how VA leads the nation in pain management options.

Operations Partners

VA's Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT) and VA's National Pain Management Program.

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