

Mind-1 and OVMSA host Brain Injury Awareness Event

By Lori Bryan, PhD

Special points of interest:

- TBI Panel features local experts
- New book targets secondary stress and burnout
- 207 applicants for the Trauma Psychology PhD track

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In recognition of March as Brain Injury Awareness Month, the UCCS Mind-1 Neuroassessment Clinic and the UCCS Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs (OVMSA) co-hosted a panel discussion to raise awareness on campus. Led by UCCS neuropsychologist Dr. Lisa Barker, local professionals working in the field of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) spoke about services and resources available for campus community members coping with TBI.

According to a recent survey conducted by Craig Hospital and presented by Liz Gerdeman of the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado, more than 40% of adults in this region report experiencing a TBI with falls as the leading cause of injury. More than 80% of these adults with a TBI reported cognitive complaints following the injury.

Robin Winger of the Fort Carson Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) shared common signs and symptoms of a mild TBI, including headaches, dizziness, memory problems, de-

pression, and sleep issues. Fort Carson DVBIC offers support, education, advocacy and advice for service members or veterans who have sustained a TBI and their family members or caregivers.

Susan Holmes leads Craig Hospital's Operation TBI Freedom and noted a broad range of services available to veterans including non-clinical case management, benefits assistance, medical and mental health referrals, and peer support.

For UCCS students with a TBI, Dr. Lisa Barker (UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic) and Ida Dilwood

(UCCS Disabilities) coordinate neuropsychological screenings and disabilities accommodations to help students receive the assistance they may need to be academically successful.

Dr. Kristin Samuelson, UCCS assistant professor of psychology, discussed the latest TBI research and active research studies in her lab to identify effective cognitive rehabilitation strategies and better understand co-occurring conditions such as PTSD and chronic pain.

Information from members of the panel can be found at the OVMSA website (click here: [TBI Information 2017](#)).

TBI Information Panel (L-R): Dr. Lisa Barker (UCCS neuropsychologist), Ida Dilwood (UCCS Disabilities Services), Jorge Arredondo (State Veteran Service Officer), Susan Holmes (Program Manager, Operation TBI Freedom),

Dr. Kristin Samuelson (UCCS assistant professor of psychology), and Liz Gerdeman (Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado).



Director of the THHC Publishes Book on Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout

By McKenzie Lockett

Dr. Charles “Chip” Benight, professor in the UCCS psychology department and director of the Trauma Health and Hazards Center recently published a book on challenges that military mental health providers face in treating soldiers returning from combat. *Secondary Trauma and Burnout in Military Behavioral Health Providers: Beyond the Battlefield*, illustrates the unique struggles mental health providers face in treating combat veterans. Dr. Benight’s research found that approximately 20% of military mental health providers report high levels of secondary traumatic stress and burnout, which directly impacts provider’s personal well-being and their ability to provide care for their clients.

Dr. Benight’s book also discusses Support-Net, the web-based intervention that Dr. Benight and colleagues developed to address secondary traumatic stress and burn-

out in mental health providers. Support-Net provides an accessible program for increasing self-efficacy, self-care, and social support that is available anytime, anywhere. Through SupportNet, users can speak with a self-care coach to further increase social support and engagement with the program.

Dr. Benight felt that secondary traumatic stress and burnout were neglected topics in the military that would benefit from more attention. Now, his book provides a guide for military administrators and providers to address these issues. “The book is designed to be a reference resource and planning document for hospital administrators and directors of behavioral health in the military, serving as a launch pad for developing and providing support for military mental health providers experiencing secondary traumatic stress and burnout.”



Charles C. Benight, Ph.D. showcases new book (click below for Amazon link)



Long receives CFSD Safety Award for Peer Support Work

By Mauricio Zumba

Since 2011, Dr. Judith Long has led the UCCS Peer Support Program at the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CFSD). The Peer Support Program is a workplace intervention model addressing the mental health needs of firefighters during their stressful day to day encounters. Dr. Long trains new and current firefighter peer supporters on stress reactions, stress first aid, sleep impairment and importance, web-based mental health interventions, and suicide awareness and prevention. Dr. Long’s passion for taking care of others is evident in her work. Recently, she was able to expand the Peer Support Program to Pueblo Fire Department and Canon City Fire District. The Peer Support Program is extremely successful yielding a high outreach to peer support specialists with 400-500 calls per year in an organization with 400 line firefighters.

For her extensive work and seven year dedication to keeping Firefighters psychologically safe, Dr. Long is the first civilian to be awarded the Safety Award. This honor

Dr. Judith Long, PsyD (second from left) receives Safety Award from CSFD Awards & Recognition Committee.



was presented by Fire Chief Ted Collas and is usually reserved for Fire. Dr. Long expressed tremendous joy in her work with the CSFD as she is able to help professionals who risk their lives daily in challenging situations to take care of each others mental health. Honored and humbled by the recognition of the Colorado Springs Fire Department, Dr. Long looks forward to continuing her work with the CFSD and expanding the Peer Support Program to other Fire Departments in the State of Colorado.

Trauma Psychology PhD program sees record number of applications for Fall, 2017

By Krista Engle

Two hundred seven applicants. Ten interviewees. Five offers. Two acceptances by two exceptional candidates. February 10th and 11th, 2016 were busy days for the Trauma program as we welcomed applicants from across the country to UCCS for the PhD program's Interview Weekend. The schedule was jam packed with activities meant to introduce interviewees to life as a graduate student at UCCS. This included one-on-one interviews with faculty and staff, informative presentations about the unique aspects of the Trauma program, social events, and a faculty reception to bring the main Interview Day to a close.

But the real work began after the interviewees returned home. Given the strength of this year's applicants, determining which of the interviewees would receive offers to UCCS's PhD Trauma program was no easy task. After making five offers in total, we are thrilled to welcome Aaron Harwell and Margaret Talbot to the PhD Trauma program! Aaron will be joining Dr. Chip Benight's lab, and Margaret will be the newest addition to Dr. Kristin Samuelson's lab.

This year's Interview Weekend would not have been the success it was without the help of the entire faculty, staff, and current students of UCCS's Trauma program. However, special thanks must be given to Drs. Chip Benight and Leilani Feliciano, McKenzie Lockett, David Dubois, and Lori Bryan for the significant time and energy they dedicated to organizing this year's events.



Prospective Trauma Psychology PhD students meet community partners through panel discussions and learn about advanced practicum placements in multidisciplinary settings.

Putting All of the Pieces Together

By Joshua LeVay

Due to generosity from philanthropic donors and steadfast community support, Student Veterans at UCCS have unprecedented access to behavioral health services. Working toward an ambitious integrated care model, UCCS combines traditional fitness resources with nutrition and a rich variety of community health practices. Both general and specialty mental health clinics provide full spectrum care for both Student Veterans and the university population at large. The Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic, located at the Lane Center, specializes in military trauma and is staffed with clinical experts for both Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.

The Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs (OVMSA) is the primary contact point for Student Veterans on campus, as they are the subject matter experts for processing veteran education benefits. Alisa Bartel and Josh LeVay, Trauma Psychology Ph.D. students in the UCCS Psychology Department, partnered with the OVMSA to create a behavioral health referral process. User friendly products were created to illustrate the pro-

cess and streamline connecting student veterans with available services. Both the OVMSA staff and Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) advisors were briefed on this material. This resource information is also provided in greater detail to first year Student Veterans in the Gateway for Personal Success (GPS) Transitions Course to educate them on resources aimed at facilitating their transition from military service to academic success.



L-R: Dr. Phillip Morris, Jennifer Phillips, Jennifer Watton, Heather Nicholson, Astrid Monar, Dr. Lori Bryan, Ava Murphy, Andrew Koloski, Burcu Johnson

Beyond the Rhetoric

By Charles C. "Chip" Benight, PhD

I thought a lot about what to write in the Director's Corner for this newsletter and decided on the world's refugee crisis. My hope in this short piece is to offer another perspective than the viewpoints that seem to be so ardently promoted. Based on the reputable Pew Research Center nearly 1 in 10 people worldwide are now displaced from their homes. This equates to roughly 60 million people in 2015. 60 million. Most of these individuals are fleeing war, famine, or both. Surprisingly, in Europe .7% of the population is displaced which is similar to levels observed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Images of refugees risking their lives to escape untenable, unimaginable, living conditions have numbed us into submission. Entire families with infants are shown as casualties taken by the waters of the Mediterranean. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, recently reported that 2016 was the deadliest year yet for trying to find a better life. Indeed, 1 in 88 individuals have lost their lives trying to flee devastation and destruction only to perish during the journey.

We must think about this very carefully as we view the world community and the role that trauma plays as families try to find a better way. Most, if not all, of these individuals are traumatized by years of war and societal unrest. Trauma often results in a host of symptoms that make day to day survival difficult with severe symptoms of intrusive memories, hyperarousal, emotional numbing, avoidance, significant alterations in views about the world and oneself, and often depression. This is especially true if the threatening conditions remain present. I often imagine how I would react to continual bombings of the area I call home. How my wife and I would respond gathering our children and our belongings that we have left and trying to find a safe haven away from the horrors of death and destruction. I do know that I have never been tested in such a way. I also know that compassion and love are critical for healing for anyone who has suffered in these ways. We have excellent treatments to help trauma survivors. Indeed, we have helped over 625 clients through our Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic since 2014. Not to diminish what we have accomplished, but this seems almost insignificant compared to the need we are seeing now in the world. At a time when "the other" is viewed with suspicion and as a basic threat to our way of life, I believe we need a more nuanced perspective. A perspective that is more thoughtful and just. All potential refugees are not terrorists. They are human beings with a range of trauma exposures and symptoms. Human suffering requires witness and demands a response. Violence is not a response; it is the problem. Until we realize that trauma is at the base of many of the world's most pressing challenges, we are doomed to a cycle of never ending despair. We can do better; we must do better.



Dr. Benight is the Director of the Trauma, Health & Hazards Center, Chair of Veteran Health & Trauma, Professor of Psychology, and Director of Clinical Training.

Select Recent Publications from the THHC and affiliates:

- Benight, C. C., Shoji, K., & Delahanty, D. (in press). Self-Regulation Shift Theory: A Dynamic Systems Approach to Traumatic Stress. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*.
- Canetti, D., Hirschberger, G., Rappaport, C., Elad-Stenger, J., Ein-Dor, T., Rosenzweig, S., Hobfoll, S., & Pyszczynski, T. (in press). Historical victimization from the lab to the real world: The effects of the Holocaust on contemporary political cognitions. *Political Psychology*
- Cieslak, R., Benight, C., Rogala, A., Smoktunowicz, E., Kowalska, M., Zukowska, K., Yeager, C., Luszczynska, A. (2016). Effects of internet-based self-efficacy intervention on secondary traumatic stress and secondary posttraumatic growth among health and human services professionals exposed to indirect trauma. *Front. Psychol.* doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01009
- Cohen, F., Thompson, S., Solomon, S., & Pyszczynski, T. (2017). Death: The Trump card. In M. Fitzduf (Ed.), *Why irrational politics appeal: The allure of Trump*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Hsiao-Chung Tsai and Russell L Elsberry, 2017: Seven-Day Intensity and Intensity Spread Predictions for Atlantic Tropical Cyclones. *Weather and Forecasting*, Published online February 2017.
- Rogala, A., Shoji, K., Luszczynska, A., Kuna, A., Yeager, C., Benight, C., & Cieslak, R. (2016). From exhaustion to disengagement via self-efficacy change: Findings from two longitudinal studies among human services workers. *Front. Psychol.* doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2015.02032
- Samuelson, K., Bartel, A., Valadez, R., & Jordan, J.* (2016). PTSD symptoms and perception of cognitive problems: The roles of posttraumatic cognitions and coping self-efficacy. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tra0000210>.
- Samuelson, K.W., Wilson, C., Lee, S., Padron, E., & Gavron, L. (2016). Maternal PTSD and children's functioning: Parenting stress and emotional availability as proposed mediators. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. DOI: 10.1002/jclp.22369.
- Stearns, S.S., Fleming, F., & Fero, L.J. (2017). Attenuating Physiological Arousal Through the Manipulation of Simple Hand Movements. *Appl. Psychophysiol. Biofeedback* 42: 39-50. doi: 10.1007/s10484-017-9350-8