



CU Trauma,
Health, &
Hazards Center
(THHC)

Special
points of
interest:

- UCCS Trauma Psychology at ISTSS
- Psychology student wins international award
- Mind-1 Clinic offers free screening to student vets

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Impressive UCCS presence at the 32nd annual ISTSS meeting in Texas

By Mauricio Zumba

The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) brings together researchers, clinicians and administrators representing various areas (Psychology, Public Health, Social Work, Medicine) to share new developments, knowledge and public policy regarding the effects of trauma and treatment. At this year's 32nd annual conference in Dallas, TX, focused on new technology to aid the understanding of trauma and delivery of treatment, UCCS dominated the stage.

Drs. Charles Benight, Kristin Samuelson and Tom Pyszczynski's labs presented a total of 16 scholarly posters, papers, and talks on various areas of trauma, and chaired or co-chaired symposiums and special interests groups.

NSF graduate research fellow Andrea Yetzer represented Dr. Pyszczynski's lab with her poster looking at the relationship between dissociation and anxiety as factors predicting the relationship between childhood

trauma and adult PTSD symptoms.

Dr. Samuelson's lab gave two posters and two presentations. Trauma PhD student Alisa Bartel examined the role of somatization on

als and coping self-efficacy on PTSD symptoms and cognitive complaints.

Dr. Benight's lab gave seven presentations including an award-finalist poster by Trauma PhD student Amanda Devane. Master's student Nicole Streeb and Dr. Kotaro Shoji each presented two posters. Carrie Yeager, 3rd year Trauma PhD student and Frank W. Putnam research scholar, chaired her first symposium on web interventions for trauma with Dr. Joe Ruzak from the National Center for PTSD. Dr. Benight presented in a symposium about the deployment of My Trauma Recovery, a web intervention developed at UCCS, after a traumatic event. Excellent scholarly representation by UCCS!



Dr. Chip Benight and Trauma Psychology PhD student, Carrie Yeager

neuropsychological deficits, PTSD, chronic pain and brain injury. Undergraduate Raquel Valadez studied the effects of negative apprais-

UCCS Psychology Graduate Students Andrea Yetzer, Amanda Devane, Krista Engle, Alisa Bartel, Nicole Streeb, and Mauricio Zumba.



Trauma Psychology PhD Student wins prestigious Research Award

By McKenzie Lockett



Carrie Yeager and Dr. Grete A. Dyb, MD, PhD, ISTSS Past President
Photo courtesy of ISTSS

UCCS clinical psychology doctoral student Carrie Yeager was recently awarded the Frank W. Putnam Research Award at the 2016 International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) annual meeting. Recipients of the award are selected based on a research proposal deemed to have the potential to make the greatest contribution to the field of traumatic stress.

Yeager's winning proposal aims to further understand how individuals engage in eHealth (web) interventions for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In particular, Yeager is interested in identifying how PTSD symptom clusters might predict how individuals differentially engage in eHealth interventions. The goal is to help providers tai-

lor unique interventions for clients based on their trauma symptoms.

Yeager originally conceptualized the idea for an assignment in her graduate trauma seminar class, she believes Dr. Kristin Samuelson and Dr. Charles Benight's support, encouragement, and guidance were integral to the development of her proposal. Furthermore, Yeager sees her award as not just a reflection of her own hard work, but as a reflection of the UCCS psychology department as well:

"This says a lot about our department. It shows that our department provides great training, great support and great preparation to become a scientist and clinician in the field of psychology."

New study to examine genetic transmission of trauma

By Krista Engle



Kotaro Shoji, PhD
Senior Research Associate
UCCS Trauma, Health and
Hazards Center

Dr. Kotaro Shoji has been a Research Associate at the Trauma Health and Hazards Center since May 2012. After completing his PhD in Social and Health Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Dr. Shoji applied for the position at THHC given his interest in trauma and the center's focus at that time on the effects of self efficacy and secondary trauma on military mental health providers.

Currently, Dr. Shoji's primary role is as the Co-Principal Investigator for the EPIGS Study, a new study funded by the University of Colorado BioFrontiers Institute. The purpose of the study is to learn more about the epigenetics of

trauma, or the interaction between a person's genetics and their environment. Most epigenetic studies to date have tested blood and saliva samples, but Dr. Shoji desires to look at epigenetics in a new way and will therefore be collecting and analyzing sperm samples. Thanks to this novel design, the EPIGS Study will also shed light on the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

In his free time, Dr. Shoji enjoys walking his dog Hana and practicing the piano. He would love one day to learn to scuba dive, though he realizes his chances of doing so while living in Colorado Springs are slim.

VHTC Offers Free Brain “Check-Up” to Student Vets

By Joshua LeVay

Starting in May’16, the Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic (VHTC) began offering neuropsychological screenings and evaluations through their Mind-1 Clinic, which according to Clinic Director Dr. Valerie Anderson are services difficult to come by in Colorado Springs. Already having served dozens of clients, the Mind-1 Clinic promotes overall brain health through increased awareness of cognitive strengths and weaknesses and recommendations about strategies to boost memory, attention, and mood. Initial evaluations assess performance on memory, processing speed, concentration, and attention.

Dr. Lisa Barker, Neuropsychologist, described the services offered as an overall “Brain Check-up.” Both Drs. Anderson and Barker are VHTC clinicians who are proud to serve the community and especially enthusiastic about the benefits this new program brings to the clinic and to the Colorado Springs community.

Mind-1 receives referrals from insurance payers, the UCCS Wellness Center, Pikes Peak Community College and clinical providers in the greater Colorado Springs area. While the services are open to the public, special emphasis is placed on serving the military community.

Thanks to generous contributions from philanthropic organizations to the UCCS Military and Veterans Pathways to Success program, neuropsychological screenings for educational purposes are free for Student Veterans attending UCCS or PPCC.

Cognitive processes can be affected by many factors. However, persons experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder and/or traumatic brain injury are particularly vulnerable. These conditions may contribute to Student Veterans having difficulty managing their academic load. Therefore, this resource may help veterans acquire appropriate assistance through more extensive follow-up care, Disability Services, or other outreach programs available to them on campus.

Neuropsychologist Lisa Barker, PhD and Clinic Director Valerie Anderson, PsyD



Call for Research Participants

Several research studies at UCCS are actively seeking new participants. Please contact **719-255-8040** or **brainrx@uccs.edu** for more information or to determine if you are eligible to participate in any of these exciting projects. In some cases, financial compensation is provided for participation:

- **Brain Health Study: Cognitive Training for Adults with Neurocognitive Problems due to mild Traumatic Brain Injury or Posttraumatic Stress (IRB#16-205):** To investigate the effectiveness of a group cognitive training program that may improve functioning in adults with histories of either concussion (also called mild traumatic brain injury or head injury) or posttraumatic stress.
- **Cognitive functioning after Head Injury or Psychological Trauma (IRB#17-001):** To learn how stress, trauma, or a head injury may be related to memory, learning, and attention performance, and how these events may have shaped your worldviews and quality of life.
- **Stress, Families, and Learning (IRB#17-013):** To learn how the children of parents who have experienced a trauma are affected by familial trauma history. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning and the children’s own trauma symptoms are examined.
- **Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma Study (IRB# 17-008):** This study examines how traumatic experiences such as combat exposure can be passed onto offspring through a mechanism called DNA methylation. Particularly, we are interested in how DNA methylation of the male germ cell in veterans and active service members is transmitted to offspring.

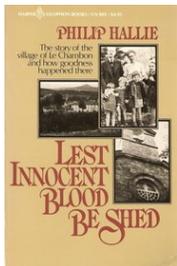
Director's Corner

By Charles C. "Chip" Benight, PhD

During this holiday season I'm reminded by the power of kindness. When we study traumatic stress we are consistently exposed to the severe side of human nature. It is important for all to remember about the capacity for human compassion and goodness. A philosopher Phillip Hallie wrote a deeply important book titled "Lest Innocent Blood be Shed" about a small town in France called Le Chambon during World War II that refused to be violent. In describing this town Hallie shared that the town was "Charged, Charged with the power of love!". This statement has stuck with me as it underscores what we can do



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



in the world to offset the seemingly endless acts of violence that we hear or see so often today. Several articles in this newsletter are written by or about our amazing students in the Ph.D. program at UCCS. Their dedication and profound commitment to helping trauma survivors is in the tradition of the power of love. I wish all of you who read this that the power of love envelopes you for the coming year.

Mobile apps can be useful tools to reduce stress around the holidays. Featured in the New York Times, Calm is a free app for mindfulness and meditation and is a perfect meditation app for beginners. Programs are available for stress management, focus, calming anxiety, sleep stories, happiness, and breathing exercises. Nature sounds and scenes are also provided on this soothing app.

Calm download (Click on icon):



Consider a year-end donation:

Help reduce the impact of trauma at local, national and global levels

Tax-deductible donations may be made through the University of Colorado Foundation:

Click: **GIVE NOW**

or go to: www.cufund.org/GiveTHHC



The Trauma, Health, & Hazards Center is a multi-disciplinary center established at UCCS in 1999. Our work includes cross-disciplinary scholarship, scientifically informed policy, clinical interventions, and educational and community programs aimed at reducing the effects of traumatic stress exposure and improving health.