

Veterans Affairs TBI Model Systems Newsletter

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TBIMS is grateful to the 600+ veterans and military personnel enrolled in TBIMS. Because of your contribution to the TBIMS research program, we have improved our understanding about TBI-related comorbidities such as sleep problems. Inside this newsletter are a list of presentations shared with national organizations to share this knowledge of important issues in TBI rehabilitation.

TBIMS and the I-MaP Expansion

TBI Model Systems (TBIMS) is expanding to study important aspects of TBI health care. This project titled, "Improved Understanding of Medical and Psychological Needs in Veterans and Service Members with TBI" (I-MaP), will examine (1) long-term physical and mental health effects, (2) impact of comorbid health conditions on recovery, and (3) chronic rehabilitation needs including accessibility of needed services. I-MaP is an extension of TBIMS, which as of 1/01/2015 has enrolled 627 military and veterans with TBI, plus 1-year and 2-year outcome data on over 300 participants. Through I-MaP, TBIMS participants will contribute additional valuable information about the chronic effects of TBI. The TBIMS/I-MaP project expansion was made possible through the collaborative efforts of VA Central Office, Veterans Health Administration,

Administration, Department of Defense, and National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research. Project funding was provided by the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, via General Dynamics Information Technology. Like TBIMS, I-MaP will be a multicenter cooperative study between the five polytrauma rehabilitation centers.

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Research Spotlight

What Are We Publishing & Presenting?

Several students are trained to do research using the TBIMS and/or IMAP data. Highlights include:

“Incidence of Sleep Apnea in Consecutive TBI Admissions at the VA Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center”*

Selected for Oral Talk at the 2015 American Academy of Sleep Medicine

Erica Schwaiger

*Winner of Southern Sleep Society’s Founder’s Award

“Charles Bonnet Syndrome Following Penetrating TBI in an OEF/OIF/OND Active Duty Service Member”

Selected for Grand Rounds, and presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the

National Academy of Neuropsychology

Marc Silva, Edan Critchfield, & Risa Nakase-Richardson

“Is Sleep Apnea a Modifiable Mechanism Underlying Prolonged PTA Duration in Acute TBI Patients?”

Poster presented at the 2014 International Neuropsychology Society Annual Conference

Jason Soble, Risa Nakase-Richardson, Dan Schwartz, & colleagues

“The Validity of Actigraphy as a Sleep Correlate in the TBI Population”

Selected for an Oral Talk, presented at the 2015 International Neuropsychology Society Annual Conference

Society Annual Conference

Joel Kamper, Risa Nakase-Richardson, Dan Schwartz & colleagues

2015 Brain Injury Summit

Dr. Risa Nakase-Richardson, Principle Investigator for the Tampa VA TBI Model System Program of Research, was honored with an invitation to present VA and NIDRR TBI Model System research at the internationally-attended 2015 Brain Injury Summit in Vail Colorado, sponsored by Craig Hospital. The Brain Injury Summit is held every 3 years and is designed to explore best practices and cutting edge professional interventions across a comprehensive continuum of care, and to foster discussion, discovery, and professional development among attendees. Dr. Nakase-Richardson was invited to present current research findings and their impact for clinical practice. Topics included sleep disturbance in persons with TBI, rehabilitation outcomes for those with disorders of consciousness, and behavior management to improve rehabilitation participation for those with severe injury. She presented alongside internationally-recognized TBI Model Systems brain injury specialists in the areas of neurology, neurosurgery, neuropsychiatry, and rehabilitation. Dr. Nakase-Richardson’s talks included:

Syndromes of Impaired Consciousness: Diagnostic Distinctions and Rehabilitation

Risa Nakase-Richardson (Presenter) & Michael Makley (Moderator)

Post Traumatic Fatigue and Interventions

Jennie Ponsford (Presenter) & Risa Nakase-Richardson (Moderator)

Neurobehavioral Functional Analysis: Paradigms for Treatment

Risa Nakase-Richardson, Dixie Eastridge, & Jeffrey Kupfer (Presenters)

Sleep and Cognition

Risa Nakase-Richardson (Presenter) & Jennie Ponsford (Moderator)

Severe TBI: Clinical Case Studies

Alan Weintraub & Nakase-Richardson, R. (Presenters)

Meet the Staff

Kristina Martinez graduated from Florida International University with a Masters of Science in Occupational Therapy. She currently works for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center as a senior research analyst.



What inspired you to work in TBI research?

“I am working in TBI research in order to enhance the quality of life for and serve our Service Members, Veterans and their families. As the wife of an Army Veteran and having worked with our soldiers at Fort Hood’s Traumatic Brain Injury clinic as an occupational therapist I am dedicated to doing my part.”

From Research to Practice

“Assessment of Sleep Disturbance in Acute Rehabilitation: Implications for Clinical Practice”

Division 22 Rehabilitation Psychology Annual Conference

**Erin Holcomb, Ph.D., Joel Kamper, Ph.D.,
and Risa Nakase-Richardson, Ph.D.**

Rehabilitation Psychology strives to empower individuals with chronic health conditions, such as TBI, and promote physical, social, and emotional well-being in their everyday lives. The 2015 Division of Rehabilitation Psychology Annual Conference was held in San Diego, California. Dr. Erin Holcomb and colleagues presented a symposia titled “Assessment of Sleep Disturbance in Acute Rehabilitation: Implications for Clinical Practice.” We asked Dr. Holcomb to provide us with a brief explanation of the symposia and why she was inspired to present on this topic.



“We know that sleep disturbance is common following TBI. We are also beginning to learn how important adequate sleep is in helping to obtain optimal outcome. Sleep itself may be a

very important treatment target within the early stages of recovery from TBI. As such, adequate assessment of sleep disturbance during acute rehabilitation has the potential to greatly inform early intervention and outcome. What is a particularly important point to make, is that different sleep disorders will require different interventions. For example, insomnia may respond well to a particular sleep medication, while something like sleep apnea would not.

Therefore, it is pivotal that we begin to understand what specific sleep disturbance and disorders are seen in the acute TBI population, as well as how prevalent they are so treatments can be properly selected and targeted to maximize recovery. This starts with adequate assessment of sleep.

I chose to submit the symposia because I wanted to present to fellow rehabilitation clinicians the benefits of objective sleep measurement technology in assessing sleep disturbances early in the course of recovery. Specifically, we have found that both actigraphy and polysomnography are very feasible within an acute rehabilitation setting and offer significant clinical value when talking about patient care and outcome. Currently, most acute rehabilitation settings rely on patient report or clinician observation for measurements of sleep disturbance. While this provides valuable information, it leaves treatment providers guessing at the underlying cause of the sleep disturbance and may not always give an adequate picture of how disrupted a patient’s sleep is. I wanted to communicate to other providers how objective sleep measurement technology is entirely feasible within the early stages of recovery and how we have used the data we have obtained to inform our clinical care and hopefully improve outcome. Currently, every patient admitted to the PRC is given the option to receive both actigraphy monitoring and polysomnography. I wanted to share our experiences with implementation of these assessment tools, both our success and our struggles (which others can learn from).”

New Research Opportunity!

***Are you a Veteran with TBI that has just finished rehabilitation (or are about to)?
Are you a family member or friend who provides support to a Veteran with TBI?***

If so, we want to talk with you. We are doing a study to learn about your experiences returning to your community. What we learn from you will be used to help other Veterans, their family and friends and the health care team that takes care of them.

If you would like to learn more and see if you can be in the study, please contact our team member, Nicole Antinori at (813) 558-3953 (Toll Free) 1-866-406-9954 ext. 3953 or Nicole.Antinori@va.gov.

Action Ethnography of Community Reintegration for Veterans with TBI, USF IRB #Pro00013169

Who's Who in VA PRC TBI Model System?

**Minneapolis Polytrauma
Rehabilitation Center**
Gregory Lamberty, Ph.D.,
Principal Investigator

**Palo Alto Polytrauma
Rehabilitation Center**
Susan Ropacki, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator



**Richmond Polytrauma
Rehabilitation Center**
Ajit Pai, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

**San Antonio Polytrauma
Rehabilitation Center**
Mary Jo Pugh, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

**Tampa Polytrauma
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Risa Nakase-Richardson, Ph.D.
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