



## **Birmingham**

Research Enhancement Award Program

Director: Mary T. Hawn, MD, MPH, BS

### **Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2011**

The Birmingham Center for Surgical and Medical Acute care Research and Transitions (C-SMART) is the only REAP that deals with surgical outcomes and the safety of surgery, a major interest in VA. Episodes of surgical care are high risk, high cost events that rely on a complex, yet vulnerable system to ensure the best outcomes - our aim is to address these problems and identify solutions discovered through our research. The primary focus of C-SMART is on acute care in surgery and medicine - tied together with transitions in care (e.g., palliative care, homelessness and rural health). Our objective is to build on our prior expertise of promoting collaborations among practitioners, organizational leaders, patients, and health services researchers to generate and apply new implementation knowledge, with a new, specific focus on acute care, advanced illness and transitions in care. The goals are to improve hospital based VA care by; 1) producing evidence on best practices; 2) identify quality measures for systems of care; 3) build a scholarly, multidisciplinary core of first rate investigators; and, 4) build an exemplary, dynamic infrastructure for HSR in the VA.

Dr. Mary Hawn, Center Director, has contributed knowledge and implementation along many aspects of surgical care. Dr. Hawn is a leader in surgical research in the VA. She currently serves as Principal Investigator on an IIR project, "Cardiac Risk and Stent Effect on Adverse Peri-operative Events," (CART), and a Pilot Project, "Measuring Up: Associations between SCIP measures and Surgical Outcomes" (SCIP). Dr. Hawn's CART Project (IIR 09-347-2), will be the first to link VASQIP data with CART-CL data. This study will provide much needed knowledge regarding the guidelines for management of patients with drug eluting stents needing subsequent surgical intervention. Dr. Hawn's research has featured in American College of Surgeons – Surgery News, "Tailor Hernia Repair to Individual Patient;" Vol 7, No. 2, February 2011 and again in September 2011.

The majority of our current projects are directly related to our REAP theme; however, we also have a number of HSR projects that relate to the focus areas of HSR&D overall. Through VA, VISN 7 and HSR&D funding, and under the leadership of Dr. Stefan Kertesz, C-SMART conducts the largest homeless-focused multisite research study supported by HSR&D. This project, Service Customization and Primary Care Quality for the Homeless (IAA-07-069-2), has enlisted 4 VA medical centers and one non-VA homeless service provider in research to develop a patient-centered quality measure of primary care for homeless patients, and to compare quality across different organizational arrangements. This work will help VA build appropriate patient-centered medical homes for homeless veterans, a population prioritized by the President and Secretary Shinseki. Dr. Kertesz has also been awarded funding and initiated work on VA HSR&D's 4-project Homeless Health Services Research Initiative, specifically his project "Housing Solutions in a VA Environment" (H-SOLVE), looking at VA's ongoing adoption of novel evidence-based housing intervention techniques. This project, with an effective start date of October 1, 2011, is a high-visibility, high-impact project involving geographic and interagency collaboration as well as strong linkages to community partners. The conduct of this project jointly reflects C-SMART's track record in the conduct of multicenter research.

The Birmingham VA Medical Center Facility Director, Mrs. Rica Lewis-Peyton, has identified growth in research as a top 10 priority in the Hospital's Strategic Plan; specifically, developing C-SMART to be in position for the CREATE and COIN applications in 2012.