



## **San Antonio**

Research Enhancement Award Program

Director: Helen P. Hazuda, PhD, MA, BA

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

The Veterans Evidence-based Research, Dissemination, and Implementation Center (VERDICT) was funded as a VA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) in 2005. The VERDICT is located in San Antonio, Texas and housed at the Audie L. Murphy Division of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) in VISN 17. The VERDICT's mission is to improve the health of veterans by researching methods of improving the performance of clinical microsystems (i.e., the small functional units or groups of people who work together to provide direct care to particular patient subgroups, for example, primary care teams or intensive care units). As noted by the Institute of Medicine, clinical microsystems are the smallest reducible building blocks within the healthcare organization that directly interact with the patient and where there is the greatest opportunity for improvement. This focus recognizes that providers (physicians, nurses, and all support staff) within the clinical microsystem must work together, as well as with the patients that they serve, to provide effective, evidence-based care. VERDICT investigators are identifying new opportunities for improving care within the clinical microsystem for problems that are complex, that have resisted mechanistic models of quality improvement, and/or are understudied. VERDICT investigators believe that interventions based upon newer organizational theories and models of care such as complexity theory, the chronic illness care model, and the patient-centered medical home can best help to facilitate change and quality improvement at the level of the clinical microsystem. VERDICT investigators are focusing on the following priorities during their 5-year strategic plan based upon our theme of clinical microsystems: 1) To identify structures and processes within the primary care setting that are associated with successful chronic illness care for patients with multiple chronic illnesses; 2) To develop and implement interventions within the inpatient setting to improve outcomes of critically ill veterans by focusing on the interdependencies and shared tasks of team members in various clinical microsystems; and 3) To advance theory by assessing whether quality improvement strategies based on the recognition that clinical microsystems are complex adaptive systems achieve better results than those strategies which are not. In addition, based upon recently developed research collaborations with the Department of Defense, we are seeking to understand the complex challenges faced by OEF/OIF veterans and to identify factors that optimize post-deployment health. The VERDICT's team of interdisciplinary researchers is led by Dr. Helen Hazuda, a nationally-recognized expert in psychosocial and cultural factors in health, chronic disease, and aging. VERDICT investigators served as PI's on four HSR&D Merit-Reviewed projects and 1 CDA that were active or initiated in FY2011. VERDICT moved to newly constructed offices on the 3rd floor of the Audie L. Murphy VAMC in May 2011. The new unit, designed to VERDICT's specifications, provides 9,200 square feet of office space, providing room for growth. Major priorities for FY2012 will be preparing CREATE and COIN applications.