

“WHOLE HEALTH” FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VA CAREGIVERS: FINDINGS FROM A PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Gala True, South Central Mental Illness Research,
Education, and Clinical Center,

Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System

Sharon Urbina, Caregiver of an OIF Marine Corps Veteran

David V. Meyer, Caregiver of an OEF/OIF Marine Corps
Veteran

Spotlight on VA Mental Health Centers of Excellence

- **VA Mental Health Centers of Excellence** (including Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers [MIRECCs]) are critical to VA's response to meeting the mental health needs of Veterans.
 - **Shared mission:** To improve the health and well-being of Veterans through world-class, cutting-edge science, education, and enhanced clinical care.
 - **Shared structure:** To combine education, research, and clinical care into a single program to dramatically reduce the length of time between scientific discovery and implementation.
- **15 Centers** located across the country
- **Distinct specializations** (specific disorders, type of problem, populations, settings) to best understand the complex context of health care services access and delivery.
- **Significant collaborative partnerships** with clinical, research, and educational experts from academic affiliates and other organizations
- Learn More at www.mirecc.va.gov

South Central MIRECC and HSR&D partnership

- SC MIRECC Mission is to promote equity in engagement, access and quality of mental health care for Veterans facing barriers to care, especially rural Veterans.
 - Spans VISNs 16 and 17, with anchor sites in Houston, TX, Little Rock, AR, and New Orleans, LA.
- HSR&D IIR 14-399 “Communicating Impact of TBI on Community Reintegration through Photovoice”

Poll question #1: What is your level of familiarity with photovoice methods?

- I am very familiar with photovoice methods.
- I am somewhat familiar with photovoice methods.
- I am not at all familiar with photovoice methods.



Photovoice

- Community Based Participatory Research method
- Use of camera allows participants to record, discuss, and communicate their realities
- Photograph and description of photograph provide immediate data, foundation for participatory sharing of knowledge
- Diverges from more traditional research methods in focus on participants as collaborators, shared ownership of findings, and forms of dissemination

From War to Home: Through the Veteran's Lens *



Visual methods aided

- reflection
- sharing stories
- engaging audiences

Highlighted need for **formal caregiver involvement**

Partners informed current study

- helped shape aims & methods
- serve on Steering Committee
- Program Manager in NOLA

Context: Post 9/11 Military Caregivers

- Over 1.1 million providing care for post-9/11 Veterans
- Compared with pre-9/11 caregivers more likely to be:
 - Spouse/partner
 - Under 30
 - Employed outside the home
- Less than half report having a support network
- Compared with pre-9/11 Veterans, the Veterans they are caring for are roughly twice as likely to have:
 - Behavioral health condition
 - VA disability rating
 - Traumatic Brain Injury

Current Study: Focus and Aims

- OEF/OIF/OND Veterans with TBI and their caregivers
- Given cameras and asked to share their experiences with health care and community reintegration
- Engaged in identifying target areas and strategies to improve post deployment care and reintegration

Collaborators

Sarah Ono (Co-Investigator
and Site PI)

Other Co-Is

Helene Moriarty

Laraine Winter

Baris Konur

Randy Roig

Team—

Ray Facundo

John Marmion

Mary Frances Ritchie

Ivy Terrell

Steering Committee—

Jeremy Brewer

Laurie Cancienne

Lawrence Davidson

Alex Glover

Belle Landau

Courtney Lyndrup

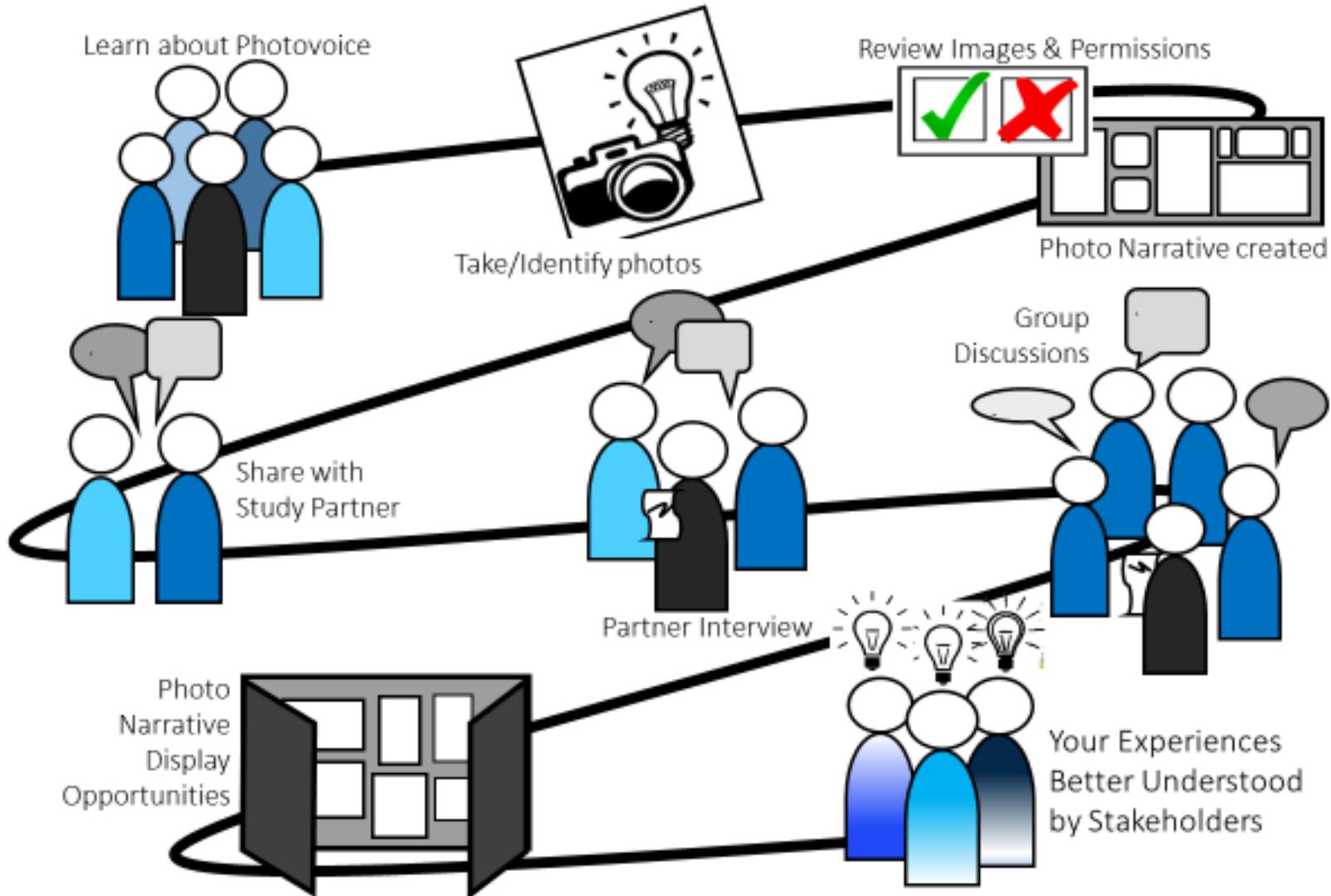
Meg Kabat

Lisa Perla

Nina Sayer

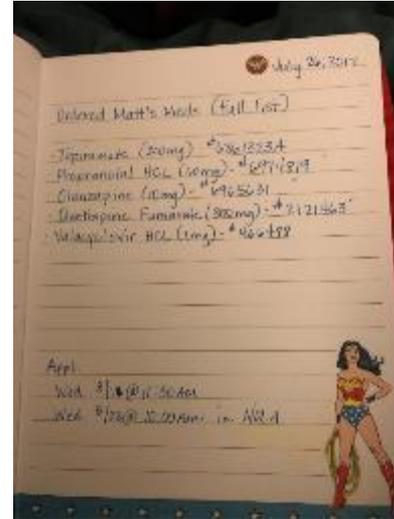
Our other Care Partner
and Veteran
collaborators

Methods



Caregiver Participants

Total number	26
<u>Relationship to Veteran</u>	
Spouse/partner	20
Parent	3
Sibling/Adult Child	3
Enrolled VA Family Caregiver Program	9
Have child(ren)	15
Female	23
Male	3
Age range (mean)	18-67 (37)
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>	
White	19
African American	3
Asian/PI	1
Hispanic/Latino	3



Early and emerging focus on Whole Health

Group meetings

--Give talks to providers and policy-makers

Steering Committee meeting

-- what does WH approach look like from caregiver's POV?

Annual Mental Health Summit

--importance of integrative health, community programs

Caregiver Appreciation Event

--sources of support and unmet needs



Whole Health Model: Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation

Personalized, proactive, **patient-driven** model that promotes whole health for Veterans and their families-

- Personalized care = putting Veteran/family needs first & a customized health plan;
- Proactive care = focus on preventive, rather than reactive, care options such as mind-body approaches and nutritional changes;
- Patient-driven care = patient & family empowered in self care & partnering with care team.



WHOLE HEALTH LIBRARY

Advancing Skills in the Delivery of Personalized, Proactive and Patient-Driven Care

- About
- Key Documents
- Courses
- Educational Overviews & Clinical Tools
- Veteran Handouts

Whole Health:

- Places each person at the center of his or her own health care
- Shifts the focus of care toward health and well-being
- Utilizes Mindful Awareness to promote self-care and healing
- Emphasizes the importance of relationships and partnerships
- Incorporates a range of conventional and complementary approaches
- Supports the VHA's mission and #1 strategic goal
- Includes courses, educational overviews, clinical tools and Veteran handouts

VHA Mission

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VHA #1 Strategic Goal

Provide Veterans personalized, proactive, and patient-driven health care.



Whole Health is a collaborative effort of the VHA Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health, Integrative Health Program, in support of the VHA's effort to affect transformational change towards a *Whole Health* model of health care delivery.

Page last updated: August 9, 2017
Questions or suggestions? Contact the Webmaster.

Whole Health Education Champions

WHOLE HEALTH LIBRARY

Advancing Skills in the Delivery of Personalized, Proactive and Patient-Driven Care

About

Key Documents

Courses ▾

Educational Overviews & Clinical Tools

Veteran Handouts

Listed below are Veteran handouts to support the Whole Health journey. They are organized around the eight areas of self-care in the Circle of Health and the two areas in the middle. Eventually, many handouts will be available. Within any given handout, you may see a few yellow highlights. These indicate other Veteran handouts that in the future will be linked to the handout you are reviewing now.

At the Center of the Circle of Health

- [Whole Health: It Starts with Me](#) 

Mindful Awareness

- [An Introduction to Mindful Awareness](#) 
- [Mindful Awareness Practice in Daily Living](#) 
- [Precautions with Using Mindful Awareness Practices](#) (*in progress*)

Power of the Mind

- [An Introduction to the Power of the Mind](#) 
- [Breathing and Health](#) (*in progress*)
- [Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Progressive Relaxation](#) (*in progress*)
- [Seated Meditation](#) (*in progress*)



Poll question #2: Where is your facility in terms of Whole Health implementation?

- My facility is at the “foundational” or early stage of implementation.
- My facility is at the “enhancement” or intermediate stage of implementation.
- My facility is at the “cutting edge” or advanced stage of implementation.
- Don't know/Does not apply

Caregivers: engaging with questions around Whole Health

- What does Whole Health look like from the caregiver's perspective?
- What needs to happen within VA to reach Whole Health goals?
- How can existing VA and community resources be utilized to move us closer to Whole Health?

Sharon & Carlos

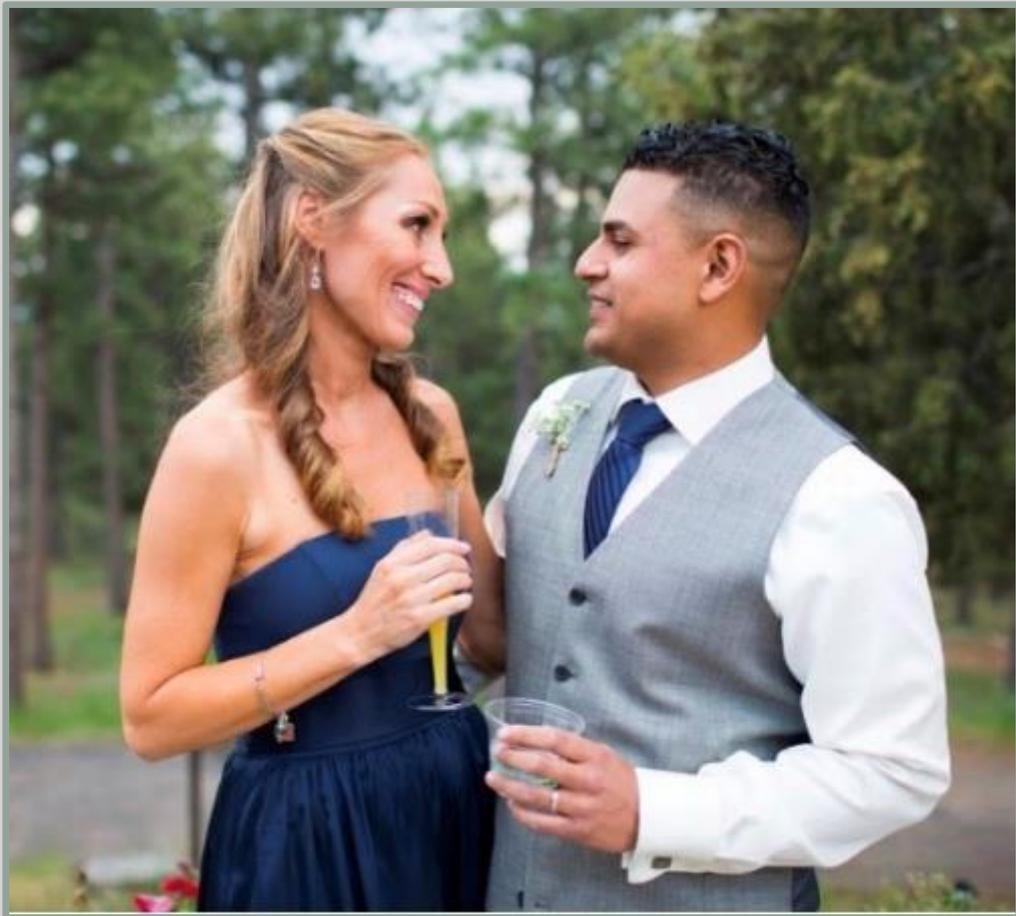




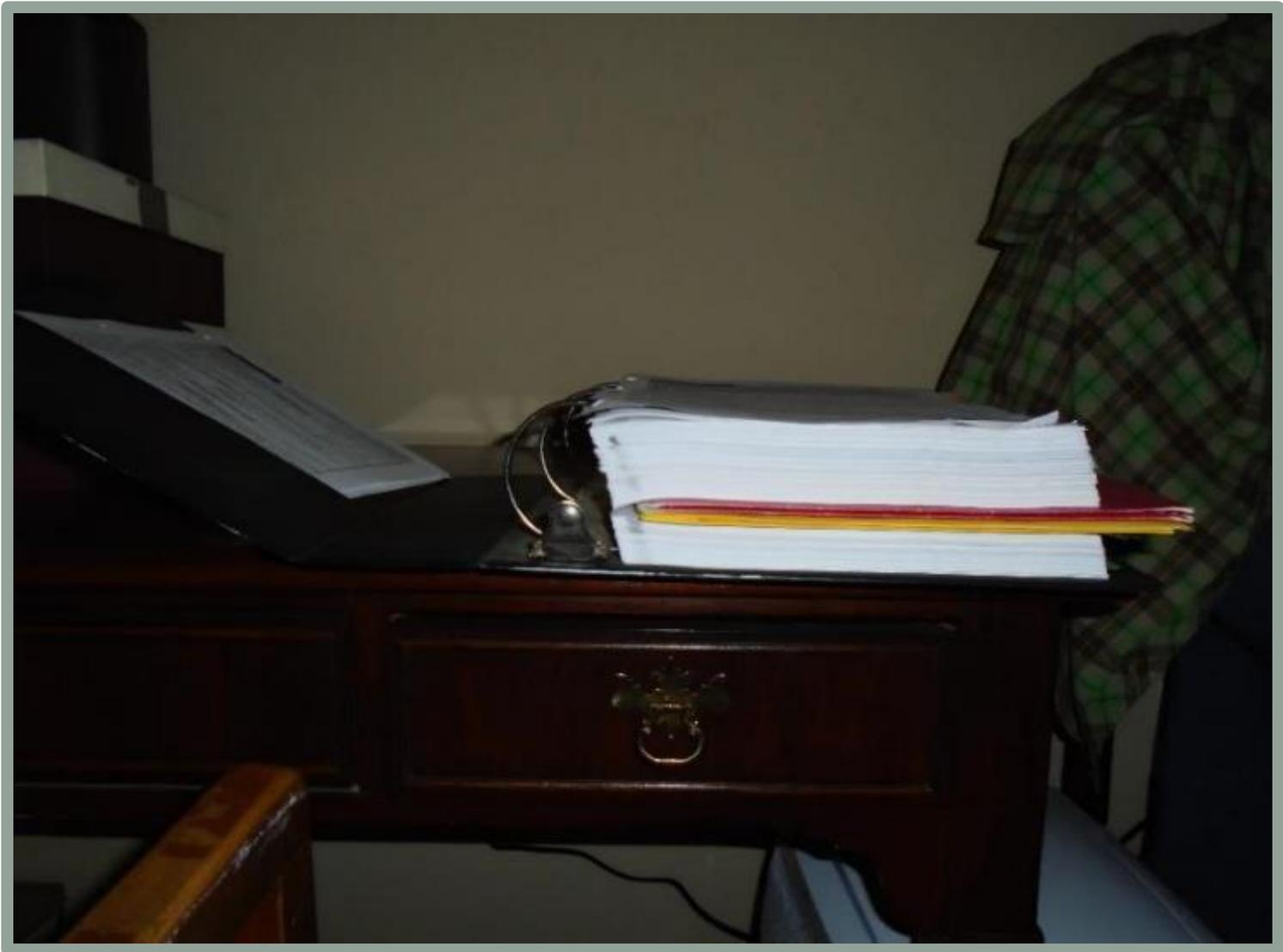


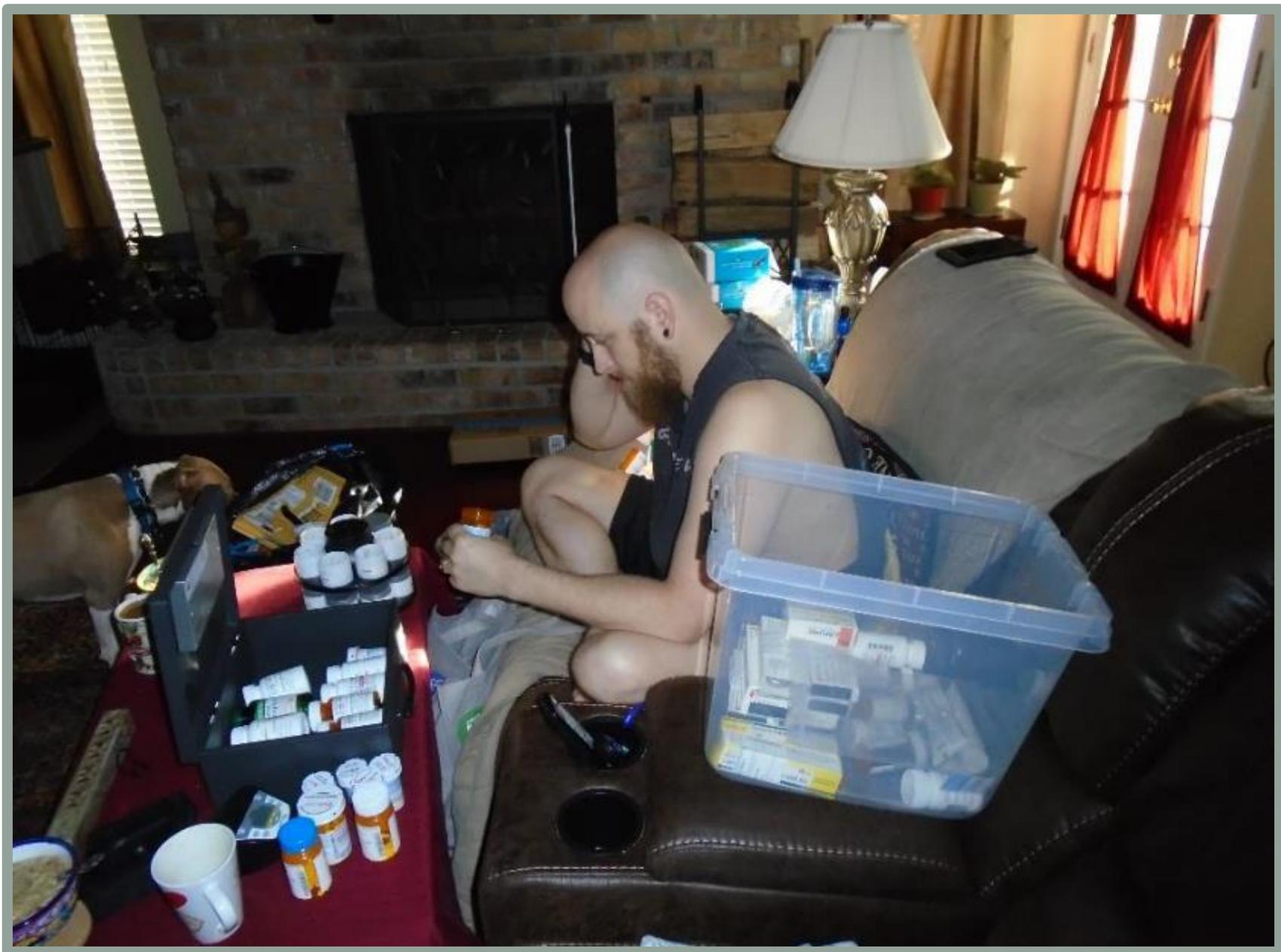






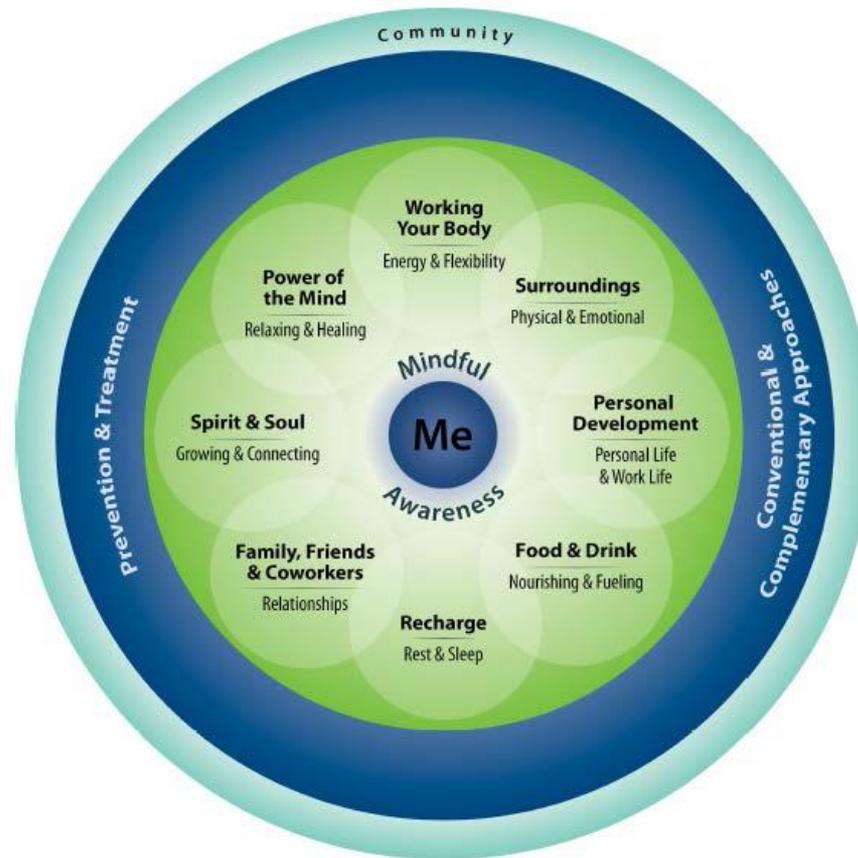
David & Donny







Where do caregivers see themselves in the circle?



Tips for providers

- **Ask**—do you have a caregiver/care partner? (i.e., someone in your life who is involved in supporting you in your health and wellbeing?)
- If yes, **would you like to invite them to participate** in this or future visits? Have me communicate with them in general?
- If no, **who is your support system?** What do you do when you feel overwhelmed?
- If **Veteran seems lost** (e.g., asking same question over and over), ask “Would you like me to call (caregiver) about this?”

Opportunities and Future Directions

- Community-based programs and support groups tailored to the **age/generation** of the caregiver
- Support groups for **rural-dwelling** caregivers (virtual?)
- **Increase consistency** of Integrative Health programs across facilities/regions
- “Navigators” to **help caregivers coordinate** across VA and CHOICE programs
- **Engage caregivers** in research and program evaluation

“Never give up on someone with a mental illness. When "I" is replaced by "We", illness becomes wellness.”

— Shannon L. Alder

Sources and Resources

On Caregivers:

- RAND Military Caregivers Study (2014)--
<https://www.rand.org/health/projects/military-caregivers.html>
- VA's Caregiver Support Program-- <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>
- Interventions to support Caregivers or Families of Patients with TBI, PTSD, or Polytrauma: A systematic review. VA ESP Project #09-009--
<http://vaww.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/informal-caregiving.cfm>

On VA's Whole Health Initiative:

- Whole Health websites
 - <http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/about.html>
 - <https://www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/>
- Center for Evaluating Patient Centered Care in VA (EPCC)--
https://www.queri.research.va.gov/partnered_evaluation/patient_care.cfm

On Photovoice and From War to Home:

- Wang and Burris (1997) Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Ed and Behavior* 24: 369-387.
- True, Rigg, Butler (2015) Understanding barriers to mental health care for recent war Veterans through Photovoice. *Qual Health Res* 25(10): 1443-1455.
- From War to Home-- www.va.gov/FromWarToHome

Funding & Disclaimer

- This work was supported in part by the South Central MIRECC and VA HSR&D IIR 14-399
- The view expressed here are those of the presenters and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs



Questions?

Jennifer.True2@va.gov

Photo by Jennifer V.