

Atlanta VAMC

Rehabilitation Research & Development Center News

Center of Excellence in Aging Veterans with Vision Loss

W I N T E R 2 0 0 4

Research Project of the Quarter

Caregiver Burden and the Rehabilitation of Aging Visually Impaired Veterans

Inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation service providers are under increasing pressure to demonstrate that their services result in both improved function and improved quality of life. This mandate extends not just to clients receiving rehabilitation services, but to their family caregivers as well. Too often, outcomes of a rehabilitation intervention are defined only in terms of measurable gains and/or declines in physical, emotional and psychosocial modalities of the client, thus post-rehabilitation function is obviously of utmost importance. However, family members often play a critical (and all too often overlooked) role in the overall gains and decrements in functional status experienced by the client. In addition, family caregivers themselves are

affected by the rehabilitation experience, in terms of changes in roles and the associated degree of caregiver burden that they may experience. This is especially relevant to blind rehabilitation in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as that program specifically incorporates family training programs into residential rehabilitation.

The problem that this new research study (VA merit grant C-3219-R *Caregiver Burden and the Rehab of Aging Visually Impaired Veterans*) being conducted by Dr. Williams is looking at is whether we can measure appreciable declines in "caregiver burden" experienced by individuals who find themselves in a care giving role for a visually impaired family

member. By identifying potential benefits that VA blind rehabilitation programs provide to visually impaired veterans and subsequently to their families and caregivers, the VA may be better positioned to develop recruitment strategies to more effectively target and serve this group of at-risk veterans. Moreover, this study of caregiver burden among family members of visually impaired veterans will further add to our existing knowledge in this area and will provide some very important clues as to the impact that these training programs have on families of visually impaired veterans.

For more information about this project, contact Dr. Williams at 404-321-6111, ext. 7981.

About the Researcher...

Mchael D. Williams, Ph.D.



Dr. Williams is a Research Scientist at the Atlanta VA Medical Center's Rehabilitation R&D Center. He also holds appointments as an Instructor at Georgia State University, and as a Research Scientist at Georgia Tech's Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access. His research interests include the utilization of healthcare services and programs among older persons; outcomes and program evaluation of VA-sponsored blind rehabilitation services; secondary analysis of national health and morbidity prevalence datasets; and processes and family / informal caregiving for elderly disabled care recipients. Dr. Williams' active research studies include VA grants 3222R "Assessing Help-Seeking Behavior as a Predictor for Participation in Visual Impairment Rehabilitation" (Principal Investigator); C3219R "Caregiver Burden and the Rehab of Aging Visually Impaired Veterans" (Principal Investigator); "Caregiver's Intensified Low Vision Rehabilitation Program" (Co-Principal Investigator); and "Depression and Depressive Symptomatology Among Veterans Eligible for VA Blind Rehab" (Principal Investigator).

Rehabilitation Research & Development Center

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Important Dates During ...

- ?? **January**
National Eye Care Month
National Glaucoma Awareness Week (19-25)
- ?? **February**
American Heart Month
Low Vision Awareness Month
- ?? **March**
Cataract Awareness Month
National Nutrition Month
Save Your Vision Week (2-8)
American Diabetes Alert (25)

*The eyes indicate the antiquity of the soul -
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Research Volunteer Opportunities

**Are you 65 years old or older?
Do you wish prescription information was easier
to read and understand?
We need your help with a study to make health
materials easier to read and understand.**

This study is being done at the Rehabilitation Research and Development Center at the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Hospital.

You can help if you are 65 years old or older and want to help improve the prescription information that you read. We will look at your vision, hearing, thinking, and ask you some questions about yourself.

We can provide transportation if you need it. If you qualify, the study is a one-time visit. The visit could take up to 3 to 4 hours including breaks. We will pay you for your time (\$30 per visit).

**If you are interested in finding out more, call:
Lauren Rooney
404-321-6111 extension 7515**

Is your vision 20/200 or worse, have you been diagnosed as legally blind, or do you have a hearing loss that keeps you from hearing well?

Are you 60 years or older?

We are studying how well people with impaired vision and/or impaired hearing are able to manage in their daily lives. This study requires 2 visits to the Atlanta VA Medical Center.

You will be paid \$10/hour for your participation.

For information contact:
Adrienne Lloyd at 404-321-6111, ext 6822
Rehab Research & Development Center, Atlanta VAMC

Have you been diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP)?

Are you legally blind?

The Atlanta VA Medical Center Rehab R&D Center and Emory University are looking for volunteers to participate in a study of visual function and everyday function in people with Retinitis Pigmentosa.

- ?? We are using several measures to study your vision & balance
- ?? This study could take up to 2 years, 4 times/year
- ?? You will be paid \$10/hour for your participation

For information contact:
Adrienne Lloyd at 404-321-6111, ext. 6822
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