



### **Neuropsychology Service Mission Statement:**

The Neuropsychology Service at the Bedford VAMC receives referrals from every area of the hospital, including primary care, psychiatry, and neurology, to name a few. The service provides care to both outpatient and inpatient veterans and their family members.

The service has training positions available for practicum students, interns, and postdoctoral residents. More information on each of these tracks can be found in the Bedford training brochure.

The Bedford VAMC Neuropsychology Service has four main goals:

1. To provide state-of-the art clinical evaluation to veterans with neurocognitive disorders.
2. To provide the most up to date treatments for veterans with neurocognitive disorders and their families.
3. To provide students from neuropsychology comprehensive professional training in clinical neuropsychology.
4. To provide non-neuropsychology focused students (e.g. psychology student, medical students, medical residents, geriatric fellows) exposure to clinical neuropsychology to help increase understanding about neuropsychological services to guide referral and utilization of results.

The above mission is accomplished through clinical, didactic, and research activities, as outlined in the following pages.



### **Clinical Activities**

The Neuropsychology Service consists of a General Service, three specialty clinics (the Memory Diagnostic Clinic, Polytrauma/Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic, Geriatric Inpatient Neuropsychology Clinic), and Rehabilitation Services.

#### **General Neuropsychology Service:**

The general Neuropsychology service evaluates both outpatients and inpatients, mostly conducting evaluations of younger adults, but occasionally services older adults. Consult questions include potential head injury, ADD/LD, neuropsychiatric disorders, substance/alcohol abuse, medical/neurological disorders, and possible dementia. Cognitive batteries are usually longer, and reports center more on recommendations for return to school, return to work, discharge planning, etc.

#### **Memory Diagnostic Clinic:**

The Memory Diagnostic Clinic is a multidisciplinary team clinic run by neurology (lead neurologist Dr. Ali Atri) and neuropsychology (lead neuropsychologist Dr. Maureen O'Connor), and also includes students from varied disciplines (medical students, medical residents, geriatric fellows). The clinic specializes in the evaluation and treatment of older adults with memory difficulties and suspected dementia.

#### **Polytrauma/TBI Clinic:**

The Polytrauma/TBI Clinic is a multidisciplinary team clinic run by Psychology and Neuropsychology (lead neuropsychologist Dr. Lee Ashendorf). This clinic specializes in the evaluation and treatment of returning OIF/OEF veterans with suspected TBI, and typically comorbid PTSD.

#### **Geriatric Inpatient Neuropsychology Clinic:**

The Geriatric Inpatient Neuropsychology Clinic (lead neuropsychologist Dr. Julie Horwitz, advanced neuropsychology postdoctoral fellow) receives consults from inpatient units across the Bedford VA Hospital for veterans over the age of 55. These referrals involve a wide range of questions, often including brief cognitive screenings, in-depth neuropsychological evaluations, and treatment and planning recommendations for hospital staff, caregivers, and family members. The goal of evaluation is to assess and understand the cognitive strengths and weaknesses, and provide concrete and meaningful recommendations for continued care on the units or for interventions and strategies that can be used in the home upon discharge. Recommendations may also help guide pharmacological and behavioral interventions.



### **Rehabilitation Services:**

The Neuropsychology Service offers a variety of cognitive rehabilitation services with the aim of improving the day to day lives of veterans and family member of veterans with cognitive disorders.

#### **Group cognitive rehabilitation:**

Time limited group focused on teaching compensatory skills to improve functional ability in the face of cognitive difficulties. Lifestyle factors that contribute to cognitive well being are also discussed. Groups are mostly didactic and consist of exercises and homework to reinforce skills. Actively running 10-week Living with TBI and PTSD which provides psychoeducation and cognitive skills training for those with deployment related cognitive impairment. Previous groups included AD/HD group and cognitive retraining for individuals with SMI.

#### **Short term individual cognitive rehabilitation:**

Short term individual cognitive rehabilitation is also time limited and focuses on teaching compensatory skills training in an individual format, with increased focus on targeted problematic areas for the veteran. Short term cognitive rehabilitation is typically reserved for veterans who have completed the group and would like more individualized cognitive rehabilitation, or veterans who may not be appropriate for group format (terribly compromised attention/concentration, behavioral issues, etc.). Actively running a RCT of a 12 week rehabilitation group for veterans with TBI and occupational impairment with the goal of improving occupational outcomes.

#### **Long term individual cognitive rehabilitation:**

Combines the above (compensatory skills training) with work focusing on some of the emotional and behavioral issues neurologically impaired veterans and their families face, such as role changes due to cognitive disability, acceptance of disability, re-identification of oneself in the face of disability, coping with behavioral/personality changes, and depression/anxiety issues.

#### **Older adult rehabilitation services:**

Dementia caregiver services include: psychoeducational groups and specific caregiver skills training designed to teach caregivers skills to manage neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia and psychoeducation for patients with early AD/MCI and their families; targeted psychoeducation around driving and dementia is also available.

The Neuropsychology Service runs a 12 week Memory and Aging group for cognitively intact (no dementia) older adults designed to provide education about normal aging, abnormal aging, and strategies to promote successful aging, including cognitive rehabilitation skills. This group typically has a waiting list. Flyer available on request. Currently being run as a RCT.



### Didactic Activities

On-site clinical experience is supported by didactic seminars, which include two weekly neuropsychology seminars: Case Conceptualization (Mondays 3-4) and Neuropsychology Lecture Series (Thursdays 2-3), and a monthly Geriatric Research Education Clinical Care seminar that focuses on emerging areas of research and presentation of clinicopathological case studies (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month). Brain cuttings conducted by Dr. Ann McKee are also offered weekly. There is a monthly journal club hosted by Dr. Atri (Wednesdays). Following the Monday lecture multidisciplinary consensus rounds are held to discuss diagnostic formulation and treatment planning for Memory Diagnostic Clinic patients, run by Drs. O'Connor and Atri. Guest speakers with expertise in cognitive disorders present at all seminars throughout the year. Students also have the opportunity to attend elective courses offered through the BU School of Medicine and the Boston VAMC.

### Research Activities

Neuropsychology trainees engage in a wide range of research activities within The Center for Translational Cognitive Neuroscience at Bedford VA/Boston VA (CTCN, [www.ctcn.org](http://www.ctcn.org)). The CTCN has three main goals: 1) use cognitive neuroscience to improve the lives of individuals with cognitive and emotional disorders, 2) build bridges between cognitive neuroscience research and investigators using other research techniques, and 3) educate clinicians and scientists in cognitive neuroscience and how it can be applied to understanding and treating those with brain disorders. There are also opportunities to engage in clinical research taking place involving ongoing collaborations with the Boston University Alzheimer's Disease Center (e.g., Dr. McKee's work on CTE) and the Framingham Heart Study.

### **Neuropsychology Service Staff:**

The Neuropsychology Service currently consists of 2FT neuropsychologists, consulting neuropsychologists, and staff neurologists. **Dr. Maureen K. O'Connor, Psy.D., ABCN**, is the Director of Neuropsychology and Director of Cognitive Rehabilitation for the CTCN; she spends 40% of her time engaged in clinical work, 20% involved in teaching/supervision, 10% managing administrative tasks, and 30% engaged in research activities.

Neuropsychologist **Dr. Lee Ashendorf, Ph.D.** spends 50% of his time engaged in clinical work, 30% involved in teaching/supervision, and 20% engaged in research activities. Staff neurologist **Dr. Andrew Budson, M.D.**, Deputy Chief of Staff, VA Boston Healthcare System and Director of the CTCN, plays a central role in clinical and research training within the CTCN. Staff neurologist **Dr. Ali Atri, M.D.**, Associate Director of the CTCN and GRECC neurologist, co-leads the Memory Diagnostic Clinic and also plays a central role in clinical and research training. **Dr. Robert Stern, Ph.D.** Co-Director of the ADC & Research Program at BU, provides as needed supervision of postdoctoral fellows, including clinical conceptualization of cases within the consensus case conference and research mentoring. The service currently has 3FT/two year postdoctoral fellows, 2FT/one year predoctoral interns, and 3PT/full year doctoral candidate practicum student.

## **Bedford VA Neuropsychology Alumni:**

### Practicum Students:

Alicia Semiatin (2006-07)

Research Assistant, Bedford VAMC

Lili Shaughnessy (2007-09)

Tewksbury State Hospital (internship)

Lindsay Muir-Embree (2009-10)

Maggie Chen (2010-2011)

Rachel Bieu (2010-2011)

### Interns:

Malissa Kraft (2005-06):

Boston VA (postdoc)

Current position: Neuropsychologist, Boston VA

Esther Misdraji (2006-07):

Miami VA (postdoc)

Irene Pirytsky (2007-08):

Brown University School of Medicine (postdoc)

Kelly Jones (2008-09):

Cambridge Health Alliance (postdoc)

Erin Reynolds (2009-10)

Bedford VA (postdoc)

Thomas Laudate (2010-2011)

Anya Potter (2010-2011)

### Postdoctoral Residents:

Lee Ashendorf (2005-07; clinical concentration):

Current position: Neuropsychologist, Bedford VA

John Smolinsky (intern 2004-05, postdoc 2007-09; clinical concentration):

Current position: Neuropsychologist, Bedford VA

Paul Costanza (2008-10; research concentration)

Hector Adames (2008-10; clinical concentration)

Current position: Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, Health

Psychology/Neuropsychology Track, Chicago Professional School

Meghan Mitchell (2009-11; research concentration)

Julie Horwitz (2009-11; clinical concentration)

Erin Reynolds (2010-2012; clinical concentration)