

## *Vets with Parkinson's dance to phase 2 in study*

Atlanta VA Medical Center's Visual and Neurocognitive Rehabilitation Research department is dancing again, only this time Research Scientist Madeleine E. Hackney, PhD, has changed things up in its examination to determine if adaptive tango improves mobility and cognition in older adults with Parkinson's disease.

"This time, we're assigning folks to either the leader or the follower roles, to see if deciding the dance moves, or responding to cues makes for better rehabilitation. We are also examining the effects of the adapted tango program with brain imaging for the first time," said Hackney, who is also assistant professor of medicine in the division of general medicine and geriatrics at Emory School of Medicine.

"Adapted tango appears to be beneficial for mobility and cognition in people with [Parkinson's disease], but in prior studies, we've always had everyone dance both the leader and follower roles," said Hackney.

Part two of the research study, which is now VA-funded, looks for changes in brain activity post-dance compared to those pre-dance class as related to lower limb control using fMRI using a special custom-made foot tapper device that measures motor speed. The first study, which wrapped up late last summer, was offered through an outside grant and open to the public.

Adapted Tango, which is a series of Argentine tango dance lessons adapted for the impairments of people with Parkinson's disease, has had demonstrated beneficial effects on mobility in older individuals with movement disorders.

"Regardless of what we find, it's been a joy to bring the love of dance to these individuals," said Hackney.

The study does accept volunteers to serve as dance partners for patients enrolled in the program, which will start again in August. Those interested in volunteering should contact the study coordinator, Aaron Bozzorg at 404.321.6111, ext. 6277.

*Research Health Scientist Madeleine E. Hackney (right), PhD of the Atlanta VA Medical Center's Center for Visual and Neurocognitive Rehabilitation (CVNR), assists a patient in adaptive tango March 26, 2015. Tango classes are part of 12 week research protocol where participants meet for an hour and a half long class 4 days per week. Sessions will resume again in August.*

