

Featured Research Project

Tremor, slowness of movement and stiffness are well-known symptoms in Parkinson's Disease. However, Parkinson's disease can also lead to problems with memory, bladder and bowel control, depression, and sleep. These so-called 'non-motor' symptoms have more impact on quality of life as the disease continues, and can lead to major problems like falls, caregiver burden, and social isolation. There are few studies on treatments to stop accidental urine loss or urinary incontinence in Parkinson's disease.



L-R: Ms. Sergent & Dr. Vaughan

Dr. Camille Vaughan is testing how well exercise-based therapy works for treating bladder problems in Parkinson's Disease compared to medication therapy (Solifenacin).

Dr. Vaughan is a geriatrician and clinician-investigator within the CVNR. Earlier VA studies, published by Dr. Vaughan and her team, suggested persons with Parkinson's Disease can use pelvic floor muscle exercises (also known as *Kegel exercises*) to delay the need to pee and prevent incontinence. While exercise-based treatment is recommended for many adults with bladder problems, VA is funding Dr. Vaughan's team to provide evidence about these treatments in Veterans with Parkinson's Disease through a randomized controlled trial. The **BOSS PD Study (Behavioral or Solifenacin Therapy for Urinary Symptoms in Parkinson disease)** is currently enrolling participants. Dr. Vaughan plans to include 90 Veterans from the Atlanta, Birmingham, and Richmond VA Medical Centers. For more information about this study, please contact Taressa Sergent, the *BOSS PD Study* Coordinator, at (404) 321-6111, x 5303.



Study Team enrolling a participant

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Participant Perspective: TECS Compare

by Francine White, Veteran

I found out about the **TECS (Technology-Based Eye Care Services) study** via mailed information from the Atlanta VA Eye Clinic. So, I called for more information. I had not participated in research before because it either didn't appeal to me or apply to me. As a Veteran, I decided to participate in this Tele-Eye Care study because it's a way for me to help other Veterans get access to eyecare services. I didn't know what to expect, but before we started Deirdre Dixon, the study coordinator, explained the project procedure to me thoroughly.



L-R: Francine White & Dierdre Dixon

There were a lot of people at the Saturday Eye Clinic, but they got me in quickly. When it was time for the research portion of my visit, Deirdre took me to the first machine, called "OCT." She explained everything in simple terms and made me feel at ease. It was interesting how it worked to scan the eye. When we went to the second machine, a "fundus camera," I got to look at the pictures of my retina when we were done.

Veterans need good access to all types of screening. I think regular eye screening is very important to Veterans because as we get older we still need our eyes for daily activities like using computers. I hope the research will help Veterans get the most current healthcare that doctors can provide. I also hope that more Veterans take the opportunity to participate in research. I won't hesitate to participate in future research! Dr. Maa, Deirdre, Cynthia Ward (LPN-Health Technician), and the Eye Clinic Staff are a friendly and professional bunch of workers. I enjoyed my eye visit and participating in the research.

April Maa, MD, is the Principal Investigator of *Prospective Comparison of Technology-Based Eye Care Services (TECS) to a standard face-to-face eye exam (TECS Compare)*, funded by the VA Office of Rural Health (ORH) and the Atlanta Clinical and Translational Science Institute (ACTSI).

Newly Funded VA Project

We extend a warm welcome to **Andrew Feola, PhD**, our newest Career Development Awardee (CDA-2). His project, entitled **The Effect of Estrogen Deficiencies on Vision Loss in Glaucoma**, aims to understand how hormones play a role in developing glaucoma. Glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness.

Dr. Feola received his PhD from the University of Pittsburgh. He was awarded a Marie Curie fellowship to study treatments for pelvic floor disorders at the University of Leuven in Flanders, Belgium. Before joining us at the Atlanta VA CVNR, he worked on a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) funded project at the Georgia Institute of Technology. This project investigated how long term space flight affects the eye. Outside of the lab, Dr. Feola is a devoted hockey fan and enjoys reading and enjoys spending time with his two young children.



Andrew Feola, PhD

Investigator Spotlight: Monica Serra, PhD

Dr. Monica Serra is a Certified Athletic Trainer and Registered Dietitian. Her interests are in the study of diet and exercise, and how they help prevent and treat disease and disability in older adults. She completed her doctoral degree at Baylor University where her work focused on the effects of added nutrition to slow age and disease related muscle loss. She also did a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Maryland School of Medicine where her research investigated strength training exercise to improve fatigue following cancer treatment. Her current research study at the Atlanta VA, **Aerobic Training to Improve Energy Utilization and Antioxidant Capacity in Stroke**, looks at the effects of walking on physical function and heart disease risk in older stroke survivors.



Monica Serra, PhD



L-R: Jessica Kelleher working with a research participant.

During each of these research projects Dr. Serra has worked with a research team with many different educational backgrounds and interests. After moving from the Baltimore VA to the Atlanta VA, she became a new investigator in the CVNR as well as a member of the VA Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC). She is interested in expanding her research focus in hopes of coming up with new ways to improve physical function and quality of life in older adults. Dr. Serra had this to say about joining the CVNR: "It is exciting to form new collaborations with some of the nation's leading scientists in both exercise and aging research to promote the health and independence of older adults."

Outside of work, Dr. Serra enjoys taking long walks, trying new restaurants, and any time she can, she escapes to the ocean.

Monica Serra, PhD is a Research Scientist with the Department of Veterans Affairs. She is the Principal Investigator of *Aerobic Training to Improve Energy Utilization and Antioxidant Capacity in Stroke*. For more information about this study, please contact Jessica Kelleher at (404) 321-6111, x 6254.

Coming Soon: New Column in the CVNR Newsletter

In the next issue, the CVNR newsletter will feature a new column where Dr. Monica Serra will answer your nutrition and exercise questions! We invite you to email your questions to CVNR@va.gov



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in research at our Center, call (404) 728-5064 or
visit our website at <http://www.varrd.emory.edu/>**



Connect with us at these upcoming events:

Eighth Annual Bettye Rose Connell Distinguished Lecture

SPONSORED BY THE CENTER FOR VISUAL AND NEUROCOGNITIVE REHABILITATION (CVNR)
AND THE EMORY CENTER FOR HEALTH IN AGING

Ron Shorr, MD, MS, Professor of Epidemiology, University of Florida,
Director, Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC), North Florida/
South Georgia Veterans Health System

Check our website for more information — <http://www.varrd.emory.edu/seminars>

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