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VOLUME ONE

## Welcome!

Since January 2017 when I joined NCIRE I have been impressed by the hard work and dedication of the Research Community. I am pleased to share this inaugural edition of our new NCIRE Newsletter - DNA: Details-News-Awards. It's the next step in updating the NCIRE footprint and building communication and collaboration between our various stakeholders. Our goal is to release four newsletters annually. The newsletter is designed to provide timely information and connect our community.

I'm proud of our accomplishments and eager to build on them as we move forward and continue to innovate. We are working hard to be flexible, accessible, strategic and thoughtful as we carry out our Mission - Advancing Veterans Health through

Research. We remain committed to using our financial and human resources to build the capacity of our research enterprise.

We want to hear from you so if you have suggestions or other feedback, please send those to [dna@ncire.org](mailto:dna@ncire.org)



*Rebecca Rosales*

Rebecca Rosales, MBA, CRA, Executive Director

## FOCUS on Research

### "Impact of Killing" Program Uncovers and Heals Moral Injury Wounds



Shira Maguen, PhD  
Mental Health  
Director of the  
SFVAHCS OEF/OIF  
Integrated Care  
Clinic and  
Psychologist, PTSD  
Program

Veterans who kill in combat suffer mental wounds that are often deeper and more complex than the posttraumatic stress that they already suffer.

But a unique treatment program developed by scientists supported by NCIRE – the Veterans Health Research Institute – reaches out to war Veterans who have killed and gets to the core of their moral injury and conflict.

A new study, online in the Journal of Clinical Psychology, found that Veterans who completed the program

– titled "Impact of Killing" (IOK) – not only demonstrated improvements from post-traumatic stress (PTS) and general psychiatric symptoms, they also showed healing from moral injury and functional outcomes, such as greater participation in their communities and higher rates of confiding personal thoughts and feelings to others.

"We have found that Veterans who kill in war are at increased risk of post-traumatic stress, alcohol abuse, suicide and functional difficulties," said Shira Maguen, PhD, UCSF Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Mental Health Director of the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System (SFVAHCS) Integrated Care Clinic, which treats Iraq and Afghanistan war Veterans.

“Our previous studies have shown that Veterans who continue to be impacted by killing in war often feel stigma, guilt, shame, anger and isolation,” said Maguen, a national expert on moral injury in Veterans. “Failing to directly assess and treat the mental health impact of killing could result in inadequate treatment for these Veterans and potentially cost lives.”

The IOK program builds on trauma-focused therapy, such as that for PTSD, but concentrates explicitly on the act of killing and highlights the moral struggles that a Veteran may face in war.

“The treatment emphasizes acceptance and self-forgiveness, it helps Veterans grieve a complicated sense of loss, heal relationships, make amends, and move forward in their lives,” said study co-author Kristine Burkman, PhD, UCSF Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and staff psychologist for the SFVAHCS’s Substance Use and PTSD Clinical Team.

Thirty-three Veterans, who had already received trauma-focused therapy for PTSD but reported distress from killing or feeling responsible for the deaths of others in war, participated in the study. The IOK program included individual psychotherapy, experiential exercises, and writing assignments between sessions. The average age of study participants was 61, and 26 were Vietnam Veterans. Several participants fought in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Initial IOK sessions assessed Veterans’ potential barriers to treatment, given that many felt stigma and shame related to the topic of killing in war. Another session examined common responses to killing, including physiological reactions, emotions and thoughts.

A goal was to destigmatize or normalize a wide range of reactions that many Veterans believe may be unique or shameful, according to the study. For example,

many Veterans may hide their guilt or shame for having high levels of rage during killing after loss of a fellow soldier. But that emotion is not uncommon among Veterans who have killed in war.

These and other sessions led to a key phase of IOK therapy – self-forgiveness. “It is a critical link in the moral injury framework, and it was a key ingredient in healing that was not captured as an explicit part of participating Veterans’ prior evidence-based treatment,” said Maguen.

She noted, however, that: “It is not the role of the therapist to judge whether a Veteran should or should not be forgiven, but to help identify the reasons they are unable to self-forgive and reflect upon the impact that such a decision may have on their lives.”

**>> TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE**

**PLEASE VISIT:**

[http://www.ncire.org/about\\_ncire/news/article/Killing-in-War-Leaves-Veterans-with-Lasting-Psychological-Scars-Study-Finds/](http://www.ncire.org/about_ncire/news/article/Killing-in-War-Leaves-Veterans-with-Lasting-Psychological-Scars-Study-Finds/)

## Spotlight on Shira Maguen, PhD

### What is the current focus of your research?

The main focus of my research is to improve mental health care for Veterans. My research has always been informed by my clinical work. I recently completed a study testing a novel treatment for moral injury in Veterans with PTSD. My other funded work includes a study using natural language processing to examine the efficacy of evidence-based psychotherapies in VA mental health settings and a study utilizing brief, telephone-based insomnia treatment for Veterans.

### What recent developments/findings are you most excited about?

Our team recently published the results of our moral injury treatment pilot study, showing that Veterans who are impacted by killing in war demonstrate improvements in PTSD and general psychiatric symptoms, compared to a wait list group. In addition, we published a complementary qualitative study highlighting some of the important themes that emerge in our work with Veterans who continue to be impacted by killing in war.

### How does working with the Veteran community affect how you approach your work?

I feel extremely lucky and humbled on a regular basis because the Veterans I work with are willing to take a risk and share some of their most difficult and stigmatizing experiences with me and my team. In return, it is important to me to do the best I can to thoughtfully fill the gaps I observe so they can get the best care possible. My approach has always been to work collaboratively with the Veteran community so we are learning together and working towards healing.

### Where do you see the future benefits of this research?

The hope is to work towards implementing this moral injury treatment so that it becomes part of the choice of treatments offered as usual care. As the VA is moving towards a more integrative approach to the treatment of mental health, expanding the choices offered to Veterans will be key.

### Is there something you’d like to share about yourself that most may not know?

These days when I am not chasing after my toddler and preschool boys, you can find me taking a yoga class or sometimes even dancing to salsa music. I am also a big fan of documentary films and dark chocolate.

# Contracts and Grants

## Meet Our Team!



### Newton Ong

**Manager, Compliance and Contracts** x23892

[newton.ong@ncire.org](mailto:newton.ong@ncire.org)

Provides administration for industry sponsored projects. Coordinates Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) reviews and approvals. Responsible for NCIRE's Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) Program, subcontract logistics, regulatory and compliance.



### Tiffany Murphy

**Contracts and Grants Specialist** x26199

[tiffany.murphy@ncire.org](mailto:tiffany.murphy@ncire.org)

Provides pre and post award management for federally funded awards (i.e. NIH, DoD, Foundations) and reviews new federal funding opportunities.



### Elaine Quitiquit-Palmer

**Administrative Analyst I** x25850

[elaine.quitiquit-palmer@ncire.org](mailto:elaine.quitiquit-palmer@ncire.org)

Provides general support for the Contracts and Grants Team. Facilitates the Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) Program.



### Azarah Wong

**Manager, Federal Grants** x23891

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Supervises and provides pre and post award management for federally funded awards (i.e. NIH, DoD, Foundations) and reviews new federal funding opportunities.



### Simon Wong

**Administrative Analyst I** x23893

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Monitors subcontract invoices, coordinates VA R&DC ACOS approvals for NCIRE administered projects.

## Contracts and Grants Submission Facts:

- In FY16, the Contracts and Grants team submitted over 135 submissions including subcontracts
- In FY16, NCIRE received 39 awards for a total of \$89 Million Dollars
- For FY17 we are on pace to exceed 2016 submissions

## New Awards

**Biomarkers of Kidney Injury to Predict AKI Onset and Progression in HIV Infection**

Michelle Estrella, MD, MHS

**Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study – Part B (Baltimore Center)**

Michelle Estrella, MD, MHS

**Impact of marijuana on adherence, risk factor control and cardiovascular events**

Salomeh Keyhani, MD, MPH

**Approach motivation, effortful control, and internalizing and externalizing problems**

John McQuaid, PhD

**Foundations of MRI Corticography for mesoscale organization and neuronal circuitry**

Pratik Mukherjee, MD, PhD

**Longitudinal assessment of post-traumatic syndromes**

Thomas Neylan, MD

**Brain-derived exosomes as blood markers of HIV cognitive impairment**

Lynn D. Pulliam, MS, PhD

**Capturing trans-neuronal spread of Parkinson's Disease in the brain using network diffusion model**

Duygu Tosun-Turgut, PhD

**Computerized training to improve cognitive dysfunction and risk for development of Substance Use Disorders in Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**

Joshua Woolley, MD, PhD

# Human Resources

## New UltiPro Dashboard

We are excited to introduce our new dashboard in UltiPro. It's designed to be a 'one-stop source' for important announcements, manager and employee resources, and quick access to employee pay and benefits information.

### Check out the New Features!

- Payroll Calendar - Now you can easily track when timecards are due
- Easy access to your paystubs and PTO balance
- Announcements of important company news and events

Rest assured, if you miss the old dashboard you can easily toggle between the two using the side arrow buttons on the homepage. We hope you find the new dashboard useful and informative.

Your feedback is very important to us as we strive to develop a site that is valuable to you.

Please submit any suggestions, comments, or questions to Jennifer Chen at [jennifer.chen@ncire.org](mailto:jennifer.chen@ncire.org) or ext. 22232.

## NCIRE Welcomes Three New Employees!

### Amanda L. Grijalva

Amanda joined NCIRE in March as a Human Resources Assistant focusing on JPA facilitation. Originally from California, her family moved to Arizona to be closer to extended family. Being Native American in heritage she grew up spending weekends on the Navajo Reservation where she learned traditional customs such as rug weaving, sheep shearing and cooking cultural cuisine.

Beginning her career in the tax industry, Amanda discovered a passion for assisting people. She recently relocated to California, and decided to pursue a career in Human Resources.

Amanda is very close to obtaining her degree in Business Administration and plans to study Human Resources after graduation via UC Extension, and the Northern California Human Resources Association.



### Charles (Angelo) Dangerfield

Angelo joined NCIRE as a Materials Handler/Buyer within our Purchasing Department in April. A native San Franciscan, Angelo attended Galileo High School and was raised in the lower Haight. There he learned to play basketball from Golden State Warriors legend Philip Arnold "Phil" Smith.

Angelo began his career at UCSF in the Cell Culture facility where he worked as a buyer and receiver for the past 13 years. He comes to NCIRE with extensive experience with purchasing, vendor relationships and distribution management.

Dealing with DNA piqued his interest in genetics and history, which is a passion of his to this day. His current hobbies include genealogy, travel and writing.



### Elaine Quitiquit-Palmer

Elaine Quitiquit-Palmer joined the NCIRE Core office as an Administrative Analyst within the Contracts and Grants team in May. Elaine has previous grant experience at various non-profit organizations, such as The Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Community Development (SGF) and United Indian Health Services, Inc. (UIHS). As a Program Coordinator for SGF under the California Endowment's Health Initiative, she managed 25 affiliates and had responsibility and fiscal oversight for more than 100 grant funded projects.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Humboldt State University. Some of her hobbies include going to Giant's games with her husband, gardening, coaching 2nd grade basketball and participating in the annual Giant's 5k race.



## About NCIRE

NCIRE - The Veterans Health Research Institute has one mission and one goal: Advancing Veterans Health. We sustain a scientific community of clinicians and researchers and support over 200 researchers who have joint faculty appointments at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and the San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS) and are working to foster innovation through leadership in the field of Veterans health research. Our broad portfolio of projects receives generous support from the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, and individual donors, making us the largest nonprofit research institute devoted to Veterans health in the US. NCIRE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. (Tax ID #94-3084159). Visit NCIRE at [www.ncire.org](http://www.ncire.org)



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Northern California Institute  
for Research and Education



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### Reminder:

Links to the Researcher Directory, NCIRE Organization Chart and NCIRE Administrative Contact Information are located in the upper right hand corner on the [NCIRE Intranet home page](#).

The DNA Newsletter is an NCIRE Publication  
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We welcome your input. Please send comments to [dna@ncire.org](mailto:dna@ncire.org)