

New Projects at the VOV Program

1) Developing a Manual for one of our Signature Groups

A small grant from the Annenberg Foundation has enabled us to take on the project of manualizing one of our most successful group treatment models: *The Women's Time Limited Trauma Group*. The purpose of the proposed project is to develop and pilot test a treatment manual for our Women's Time-Limited Trauma Group, a 16-20 week therapy group, developed by Judith Herman and Emily Schatzow, that has been successfully implemented over many years (Herman & Schatzow, 1984). This group aims at assisting patients to process traumatic events and memories, and integrate them with their present lives. Unique features of this group include the selection of individualized goals that are pertinent to current functioning and guide each member's work, and the use of the relational connections that develop among group members as a vehicle for change.

Manualizing the Group Model: Manual development will proceed in six steps: 1) Focus groups will be conducted with the senior clinicians who initiated and developed this group model. 2) One 16-week group will be videotaped and studied from start to finish. 3) The first draft of the manual will be written. 4) Two group leaders will be trained in the use of the manual and will conduct the group under supervision. 5) Self-report measures and a semi-structured interview will be used to assess psychological symptoms and recovery status before and after the group, and members and leaders will be asked for feedback about their experiences at treatment completion. 6) The manual will be revised and finalized based on this feedback. At the end of this process, we expect that we will have a manual that is clear, detailed, and easy to follow. We will disseminate it widely so that it can be used by other clinicians and programs that provide services to trauma survivors. A draft of the manual was presented as a work-in-progress as a workshop at the November 2007 Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD).

2) Piloting a new measure: The Symptoms of Trauma Scale (SOTS).

A grant from NIH has enabled us to work collaboratively with the PANSS Institute in New York. The goal of this study is to test and validate the SOTS, a newly developed symptom severity rating scale for Simple and Complex PTSD. Development of the SOTS was guided by the insights of clinicians, researchers and opinion leaders working with patients with PTSD, informed by lessons learned in developing and refining a well-established symptom severity scale, the PANSS (Positive And Negative Symptoms of Schizophrenia), and motivated by the need for a reliable, comprehensive, time-efficient symptoms severity rating scale sensitive to change in persons with simple and complex PTSD. This Phase I study will involve three components: 1) development of a prototype training program, 2) field trials of the SOTS with patients entering treatment at the VOV Program, and 3) evaluation of the results, comparing SOTS data with the battery of self-report instruments that we currently use.

3) Narrative Research at VOV: Understanding Resiliency in Survivors of Chronic Interpersonal Violence.

Investigators: Mary Harvey, Ph.D., Michaela Mendelsohn, Ph.D., Diya Kallivayalil, Ph.D.

We have recently obtained funds from the Milton Fund administered through Harvard Medical School to support narrative research at the VOV. The study will focus particularly on measures of resiliency in trauma survivors. The study will apply narrative research methodology to the analysis of in-depth, qualitative interviews collected at the Victims of Violence Program. The study will 1) document the characteristics of early and later recovery from chronic trauma; 2) identify sources and expressions of resilience that trauma survivors may bring to psychotherapy, and 3) elucidate the nature of therapeutic change in group psychotherapy for trauma survivors.

4) HIV/AIDS and Intimate Partner Violence: Extent and Impact of Coordination.

This study is the Ph.D. dissertation of staff member Nalina Narain.

The study will examine the structure and patterns of coordination of care between HIV/AIDS and Intimate partner Violence services at CHA. This study hopes to provide innovative ways to identify and encourage organizational connections between IPV and HIV services. This will promote more comprehensive, accessible and efficient care. This study will be well situated to make policy recommendations for an integrated, violence-informed system of care for HIV/AIDS patients, as well as comprehensive sexual health screening and referrals for abuse victims.