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Rehabilitation Facilities within JHS Receive Medical Rehabilitation Research Network Grant from the National Institutes of Health

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More studies are needed to define the efficacy of treatments to improve cognitive function after brain damage.^{1,2} Moss Rehabilitation Research Institute (MRRRI) has, in the last 10 years, built a substantial research program particularly focusing on understanding and treating cognitive impairments that result from stroke and traumatic brain injury (TBI). In recent years, MRRRI has begun to collaborate on research with staff at Magee Rehabilitation and Bryn Mawr Rehab hospitals.

In the fall of 2000 MRRRI was selected to receive the "Network" grant for the Northeast United States, one of four grants designed to support networks that serve as regional centers for rehabilitation research excellence. This 5-year grant, totaling nearly \$5 million, has provided an opportunity to solidify the growing collaborations among the three largest rehabilitation facilities in the Jefferson Health System (JHS), to obtain resources to build a common research infrastructure, and to have a positive influence on rehabilitation research regionally and nationally.

The project, entitled "The Northeast Cognitive Rehabilitation Research Network" (NCRRN), is directed by John Whyte, MD, PhD, Director of MRRRI. The Network is organized into core groups. The Clinical Trials Core, directed by Myrna Schwartz, PhD, provides for subject recruitment staff in all three hospitals to approach individuals with stroke and TBI and obtain their consent to be listed in a database of individuals interested in participating in future clinical trials for which they may be eligible. The Clinical Trials Core also operates a central research clinic where cognitive rehabilitation studies can be conducted under controlled conditions, where staff from the three facilities can receive training in conducting protocol-driven rehabilitation treatments, and where outside investigators may come to observe and learn about the projects being conducted. A "methodology think tank" provides a web-based forum for discussions of complex methodological issues related to this area of research. The Functional Neuroimaging Core, directed by John Detre, MD, and located at the University of Pennsylvania, provides access to MRRRI for a number of the proposed studies in order to help understand the neural mechanisms underlying cognitive recovery and effective rehabilitation treatments. Three pilot studies are already underway in the NCRRN, two of which make use of the Neuroimaging Core.

Treatments for TBI-associated attention deficits and stroke-related hemispatial neglect are being investigated as well as an Internet-based email system tailored to the language deficits of individuals with aphasia as a result of stroke.

Additional proposals for research under NCRRN's auspices are currently under review. Treatments that appear promising on the basis of local controlled research will potentially undergo larger scale clinical trials in collaboration with other rehabilitation facilities throughout the region. Over the next four years, this grant should enhance the quality of rehabilitation research in the region and strengthen the leadership position of the rehabilitation members of JHS in the process.

References

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