

Assessment of Department of Veterans Affairs Physical and Mental Health Examinations and the Department's Schedule of Rating Disabilities for Disability Compensation Claims Related to Military Sexual Trauma

Committee

Hortensia d. Amaro

Chair

Hortensia Amaro, Ph.D. serves as a Distinguished University Professor and Senior Scholar at the Wertheim College of Medicine and College of Public Health and Social Work at Florida International University. Previously, she held positions as Dean's Professor of Social Work and Public Health and Assistant Vice Provost at University of Southern California; Distinguished Professor and Director of the Institute on Urban Health at the Bouve College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University, and Professor of Public Health at the School of Public Health at Boston University. Her primary areas of research include treatment of substance use disorders; co-occurring mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder; gender-based violence; HIV prevention in women; and health inequities in diverse under-served populations. Her major contribution has been the translation of research to practice as demonstrated by her development and implementation of prevention and treatment of community-based programs, including residential and outpatient treatment programs for under-served populations. Dr. Amaro has received numerous awards from national, state and community organizations for her contributions to science and practice. She has served on numerous advisory committees for National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, among others. Her professional service includes associate editor of the American Journal of Public Health, Psychology of Women Quarterly, American Psychologist, Vice-Chair of the Board of the Boston Public Health Commission. She also currently serves as an elected member of the APA's Board on Publications and Communications and as President of the Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine of Florida. Among her accomplishments are election to the National Academy of Medicine; two Honorary Degrees, the Carl Taube Lifetime Achievement Award and the Sedgwick Award Medal for Distinguished Service in Public Health (APHA); Professors Who Inspire Elizabeth Hurlock Beckman Award; Ernest R. Hilgard Lifetime Achievement Award, Division 1 (APA), Humanitarian of the Year Award (Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology); Betty Ford Lectureship Award (Addiction Medicine Education, Research and Services Association); and Distinguished Visiting Professor, Ben Gurion University, Israel. Dr Amaro completed her doctoral studies at UCLA with specialization in developmental, social and educational psychology in 1982. Her doctoral dissertation investigated the role of culture, religion and gender roles in Mexican American women's attitudes toward abortion and related reproductive health issues. Dr. Amaro has previously served on 12 NASEM Consensus committees, 1 as committee chair and 1 as vice chair.

Sara Kintzle

Member

Sara Kintzle, Ph.D. is a Research Professor at the University of Southern California, Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. Kintzle's expertise lies in understanding the life experiences of individuals who have served or are currently serving in the U.S. Armed Force. Her research broadly focuses on providing insight into topics such as diversity and inclusion in the military; the impact of gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation and sexual identity on the experience of serving; risk and protective factors related to successful military transition; challenges to psychological and physical health, risk for suicide, sexual harassment, stalking and sexual assault; the experience of National Guard and Reserve service members. Kintzle has extensive experience in the dissemination and translating of scientific findings for program and policy recommendations. Sara Kintzle joined USC in 2013 after graduating from the University of Georgia's doctoral social work program. She also earned a Master's degree and a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, from the University of Iowa. Kintzle's work at USC includes a demonstrated record of obtaining external funding, having lead research studies as PI or Co-PI on grants totaling over \$12M. In 2024, she met with Congressional and Department of Defense staff on how the results from the Southern California Veterans study might impact policy. In 2021, she presented to President Biden's Department of Defense Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military and represented the United States as an expert on a NATO panel addressing sexual violence in the military in 2017. Sara Kintzle is currently the Principal Investigator on a study funded by Los Angeles County that explores the effectiveness of county veteran service officer programs assisting veterans in achieving benefits, including the impact on veteran well-being and financial benefits of the program for the county.

Heather Krull

Member

Heather Krull, Ph.D. is a senior economist at the RAND Corporation and the director of the Arroyo Center's Personnel, Training, and Health program. Her research spans military recruiting, retention, and health policy topics. She led several studies related to the joint Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs disability evaluation system. Other work includes assessments of how traumatic brain injury and mental health are treated in the military health system, options for maintaining clinical proficiency for future deployments among military providers and examining readiness patterns among those who transfer from the active component to the reserve component. She served as a member of the National Academies of Sciences Committee on VA Examinations for Traumatic Brain Injury in 2018. Krull also led an assessment of the current and projected health care needs of patients served by Veterans Affairs, a requirement of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014. She earned her B.A. in economics and mathematics from St. Norbert College and her Ph.D in economics from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Harold Kudler

Member

Harold Kudler, M.D. is a Medical Associate Professor at Duke University School of Medicine. He received his MD from Downstate Medical Center and trained in Psychiatry at Yale. From 2000 through 2005, he co-chaired VA's Special Committee on PTSD which reports to Congress. He has served on the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Board of Directors, co-led development of joint VA/Department of Defense Guidelines for the Management of Posttraumatic Stress and advised Sesame Street's Talk Listen Connect series for military families. From 2006 to 2014, he co-led the North Carolina Governor's Focus on Returning Military Members and their Families and, in 2012, was appointed to the North Carolina Institute of Medicine. From 2004 to 2014, Dr. Kudler was founding Associate Director of the VA's Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) on Deployment Mental Health. In 2014, he joined VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. where he served as Chief Consultant for Mental Health Services and as Acting Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Patient Care Services from 2017 until his retirement from VA in 2018. Dr. Kudler returned to North Carolina in 2018 where he continues his efforts on behalf of service members, veterans, and their families. He currently co-chairs the Service Member and Veterans Initiative of the American Psychoanalytic Association and the Military and Veterans Committee of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. Dr. Kudler is also a member of the American Psychiatric Association Caucus of VA Psychiatrists. Although no longer employed by VA in any capacity, he has been appointed a MIRECC Emeritus Faculty member in recognition of his substantial contributions to the development of the Mid-Atlantic MIRECC. Regarding the National Academies, he was an invited speaker in its comprehensive review of VA's PTSD efforts and represented VA Central Office in a series of meetings called to consider development of a new NASEM section on mental health. After retirement from VA, he served on the National Academies consensus study committee which reported on VA Whole Health.

Mary Jo Larson

Member

Mary Jo Larson, Ph.D. is a Senior Scientist II at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University in Waltham, MA. She previously was the Director of Health Services Research at the New England Research Institutes in Watertown, MA. Dr. Larson designs and conducts health services research studies that identify the unmet behavioral health care needs and service utilization patterns of U.S. populations. Her most recent research has focused on various issues confronted by military members and veterans, including effectiveness of pain management strategies (opioid and non-pharmaceutical therapies); deployment-related mental and substance use problems; military traumatic brain injury (TBI); missed opportunities to identify behavioral health problems; and strategies to improve specialty behavioral health services. Dr. Larson holds a PhD in Social Policy from Brandeis University and MPA from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government where she was honored as a Lucius N. Littauer Fellow. She served on the 2013 Institute of Medicine Committee on Assessment of Resiliency and Prevention Programs for Mental and Behavioral Health in Service Members and their Families and the 2011 Institute of Medicine Committee on Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment and Management of Substance Abuse in the Armed Forces.

Susan McCutcheon

Member

Susan McCutcheon, Ed.D., M.S.N. retired in 2021 after a thirty-eight-year career in the Department of Veterans Affairs. She most recently served as the National Mental Health Director of Family Services, Women's Mental Health and Military Sexual Trauma (MST) for the Office of Mental Health Services and Suicide Prevention in the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC. Dr. McCutcheon had national oversight for three distinct and significant mental health programs: family mental health services for veterans, mental health services for women veterans and mental health services for veterans who had experienced MST. She was responsible for developing clinical policies, providing national guidance, and preparing testimony and defining the vision of mental health programming in her area of responsibility. She developed training to support the provision of EBP family therapies, provided continuing education for the facility-based MST Coordinators, and created an annual women's mental health mini-residency which was also attended by healthcare providers from the Department of Defense. Prior to assuming her responsibility in VA Central Office in 2004, Dr. McCutcheon was the Director for Community Mental Health at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center in Ohio. Most of her career has been in the field of mental health with a major emphasis on trauma, women's issues, serious mental illness and families. Dr. McCutcheon has received graduate degrees in Psychiatric/ Mental Health Nursing, Industrial/Organizational Psychology and Educational Administration. She was also selected as a Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow and completed a three-year fellowship. The National Disabled American Veterans (DAV) presented Dr. McCutcheon with their 2019 Special Recognition Award. This award recognized her many years as a policy maker and program manager of Veterans' programs with regards to addressing the needs of women veterans, but also in the area of MST.

Marie-Christine Nizzi

Member

Marie-Christine Nizzi, Ph.D., Ph.D., is a licensed clinical neuropsychologist. She is the CEO of Precision Psychologie PLLC and the Head of Research and Program Development in the Amputee Program at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. Her research focuses on developing new patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) to inform treatments and better support the resilience, quality of life, and sense of self of patients with a history of trauma and limb loss. She was named 2018 Harvard Horizons Scholar for her work with U.S. Veterans and recipients of a face transplant. As the immediate Past President of Harvard Alumni for Mental Health and current Director of Harvard Alumni Professional Interest Groups, she received the Outstanding Community Impact award from Harvard in 2023. An international specialist, Dr. Nizzi completed two Ph.D.s: one from Harvard University and one from Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne. She received her CPT certification from the VA Boston, where she worked in the National Center for PTSD - Clinical Team.

Logan C. Peterson

Member

Logan C. Peterson, M.D., FACOG is an Assistant Professor and the Director of Clinical Clerkships in the Department of Gynecologic Surgery and Obstetrics at the Uniformed Services University. He is board-certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and is a Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Dr. Peterson earned his medical degree from Saint Louis University School of Medicine and completed internship and residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington. He then served as an attending physician at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center where he also served as the medical director for the Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exam program. After completion of his military service, Dr. Peterson joined the faculty of the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine at the Uniformed Services University where he currently serves as OB/GYN clerkship director. He continues to be involved in patient care at Walter Reed and at the United States Naval Academy.

Carolyn Porta

Member

Carolyn M. Porta, Ph.D., M.P.H., RN, SANE-A, FAAN, FNAP is an Associate Vice President and Professor at the University of Minnesota, and a sexual assault nurse examiner at Regions Hospital, a level 1 trauma center in St. Paul. Her research focuses on workforce development and on advancing evidence for patient-centered trauma-informed care of those who have experienced sexual violence. She is currently funded by HRSA to strengthen the forensic nursing workforce, and by NIOSH as a Co-PI of the Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety leading the occupational and environmental health nursing program. Her extensive leadership in workforce development projects has strengthened health professionals, leaders, and teams around the globe. Her forensic nursing expertise and provision of direct patient care for those who have experienced sexual violence position her to provide rich and salient insights grounded in science and real-world experience. Porta is an inducted fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, as well as the National Academy of Practice. She is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Forensic Nursing. She holds a Ph.D., three relevant Master's degrees, and an undergraduate degree in nursing. She is board-certified as a sexual assault nurse examiner and has training in forensic experiential interview techniques. She is an appointed member (special government employee status) of the National Advisory Council for Nursing Education and Practice. In Minnesota, she serves on the DHS Special Review Board which hears petitions of civilly committed persons, including sex offenders, seeking relief.

David N. Smith

Member

David Smith, M.D. is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at Yale University School of Medicine, a clinical trial site senior Principal Investigator, and a Board-certified practicing noninvasive cardiologist. He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Connecticut, his medical degree at UMDNJ (Rutgers) - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and then attended Yale University for his Internal Medicine Residency, Post-doctoral NIH Vascular Biology Fellowship, and Clinical Cardiology training. Dr Smith completed the Diversity in Clinical Trials certification from the National Medical Fellowships and has recently been an instructor for the ARC trial of the National Minority Quality Forum. He is a National Speaker in biotechnology, pharmaceutical industry, and continuing education. Dr Smith is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and the American College of Cardiology.