



Veterans Health Research Briefing *Understanding Opioids and Chronic Pain: From Bench to Bedside*

Thursday, May 24, 2018

12:00-1:30pm

1310 Longworth House Office Building

Speaker Biographies



Dr. Dib-Hajj is an Associate Director of the Center for Restoration of Nervous System Function at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in West Haven, CT and a Senior Research Scientist in the Yale School of Medicine and Graduate School. He received his undergraduate education from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and his PhD from the Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. His research for the past 2 decades at the VA and Yale has centered on the molecular basis of human excitability disorders including pain and epilepsy, with a focus on the role of voltage-gated sodium channels in these disorders, and as targets for new therapeutics. He has served on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Paralyzed Veterans of America Educational Foundation, and is currently serving on the Board of Directors of the US-based National Disease Research Interchange. He serves on the editorial boards of several journals, and as a permanent member of the Neurobiology B merit award panel at the VA BLRD service, and as ad hoc reviewer for the NIH and international funding agencies. He has published more than 180 primary papers and reviews, and has established national and international collaborations with academic and pharmaceutical groups.



Erin E. Krebs, MD, MPH is a general internist and health services researcher at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs (VA) Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota. She completed medical school and internal medicine residency at the University of Minnesota, followed by fellowship training in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program at the University of North Carolina. She was awarded a five-year VA Career Development Award focused on improving the quality and safety of opioid prescribing in primary care. Dr. Krebs' professional goal is to improve the management of chronic pain in primary care. Her research program is funded by VA, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), and the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). She recently completed the landmark VA-funded SPACE trial, which compared opioid therapy versus non-opioid pain medication therapy over 12 months for chronic back pain or osteoarthritis pain. She currently leads the VOICE trial, a multi-site study comparing two collaborative care interventions for improving pain management among VA patients on high-dose long-term opioid therapy, and the EPOCH study, a nationwide prospective cohort study assessing pain and quality of life outcomes of opioid dose reduction in >9000 Veterans prescribed long-term opioids.



Dr. Bair completed residency training in Internal Medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, followed by fellowship training in health services research at the Regenstrief Institute in Indianapolis. He then completed a VA fellowship in Medical Informatics at the Roudebush VA Medical Center. Since completing fellowship in 2004, Dr. Bair has been a VA staff physician and core investigator at the VA HSR&D Center for Health Information and Communication. He has served on several national VA committees related to improving pain management. These include the National VA Pain Research Working Group and the VA National Pain Management Strategic Coordinating Committee. Outside the VA, Dr. Bair has served on the American Pain Society Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee and was one of three peer reviewers for the CDC's guideline on opioid management.

Dr. Bair's research focuses on understanding the interface between affective disorders (e.g. depression and anxiety) and chronic pain and developing strategies to improve pain management in the primary care setting. He has developed and tested several interventions that combine pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic treatments in VA primary care settings. His recent trials contrast pharmacological and behavioral approaches to pain management. Dr. Bair has been involved in several clinical trials that optimize medications as an intervention component, and several others that have used behavioral treatments including pain self-management, cognitive-behavioral therapy, structured exercise, yoga, massage, and peer support.