

# Seattle Institute for Biomedical and Clinical Research



May 2012 - July 2012

www.sibcr.org

## FEATURE



**Murray Raskind, MD**

**M**urray Raskind, MD, Director, MIRECC, VA Puget Sound Health Care System; Director, Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, University of Washington; and a longtime SIBCR board member first focused his career on brain noradrenergic abnormalities in aging and Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Raskind's search for better treatments for military PTSD began with his clinical experience as medical advisor to the VA Puget Sound African American Veterans Stress Disorders Program beginning in 1995 (a role he continues to the present). The most common and distressing symptoms reported by these Vietnam combat Veterans with chronic PTSD are terrifying combat reenactment nightmares that awakened them sweating, anxious and unable to return to their severely disrupted sleep; and daytime irritability, hypervigilance and unpredictable anger outbursts that continued to destroy careers and families decades after these Veterans had returned from war. He observed that these treatment resistant PTSD symptoms appeared to arise from a persistent and now maladaptive increased brain response to the "adrenaline-like" stress chemical, norepinephrine. Dr. Raskind reasoned that a medication that normalized the brain norepinephrine response and was able to enter the brain easily would alleviate these Veterans' previously treatment resistant PTSD symptoms. Prazosin, an inexpensive norepinephrine "blocker" drug introduced to treat hypertension in 1973, was just such a medication and it worked!

Funding from VISN 20 MIRECC support, and then a VA R&D Merit Review and a DoD grant administered by SIBCR allowed Dr. Raskind and his colleagues to complete three positive randomized controlled trials of prazosin for PTSD in Vietnam Veterans at VA Puget Sound and in active duty soldiers at Joint Base Lewis McChord who had returned from Iraq and Afghanistan combat deployments. This active duty soldier MIRECC study is the first ever performed for any behavioral disorder in active duty combat experienced service members, and a pioneering example of VA/DoD collaboration. Prazosin is increasingly widely prescribed across VA and DoD for PTSD. Dr. Raskind also noted prazosin reduced or eliminated alcohol abuse as "self medication" in the Veterans whose PTSD symptoms responded beneficially to prazosin. And, coming full circle to Alzheimer's disease, he and his colleagues have demonstrated that increased noradrenergic activity contributed to agitation in dementia.

In recognition of his contributions to noradrenergic system involvement in PTSD, alcohol abuse, and dementia, Dr. Raskind was selected as the 2011 Barnwell awardee, VA's highest honor for excellence in clinical research.

## EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

Please join us for the SIBCR  
Employee Appreciation on  
Tuesday, May 15th  
Time: 10 AM  
Building 1, Room 240  
Refreshments will be served!

## WELCOME!

Darla Chapman, Michelle Erickson, Allyn Franklin, Breanna Oberlin, Kristin Okinaka, Sofia Olson, Emily Wing and Magdalena Wojtowicz