



RICE HUMANITIES
Medical Humanities

Health, Humanism, and Society Scholars – Project Submission Form

Project Title: **ACT on Health**

Project Description:

Dr. Lilian Dindo is a clinical psychologist and associate professor in the Department of Medicine, Section of Health Services Research at Baylor College of Medicine. She oversees a portfolio of projects related to providing psychotherapy trials in adults with psychiatric and medical conditions. Jointly, her lab is called the “ACT on Health” team. Three current projects are described below.

Students: Please note on your essay which project(s) you’re interested in. If you’re interested in all 3 that is OK, or if you’re unsure but would like to talk with the host more during the interview process that is OK too. Because all three of these projects are with one host team, an application for this posting will only count as one of your 6 total project selections.

Project 1: **SERVE: Support & Education for Returning Veterans**

The **overall aim** of this project is to address the needs of Veterans returning from the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (OIF/OEF/OND) with polytrauma (mild traumatic brain injury, psychological distress, and pain). Specifically, we seek to improve symptoms of distress and bolster functioning and reintegration by providing a Veteran-centered, non-stigmatizing, 1-day “life skills group workshop”.

In a **pilot study**, we tailored our 1-day Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) workshop for OIF/OEF/OND Veterans with the polytrauma clinical triad. Veterans who attended this workshop exhibited significant drops in distress and improvements in reintegration over and above those Veterans who received usual care.

The **current study** is a 4-year randomized controlled trial comparing the efficacy of a 1-day ACT plus education, resources, and support workshop (ACT+ERS) to an education, resources, and support (ERS) only workshop on improvements in reintegration and distress. Each month, 6-7 Veterans are recruited and randomly assigned to attend either the ACT +ERS workshop or ERS only workshop and are then followed-up for 6 months.

Project 2: **PrePARE: Preoperative Pain and Rehabilitation Education.**

The **overall aim** of this project is to prevent the development of persistent pain and opioid misuse following surgery in at-risk patients.

In a **pilot study**, we showed that ‘at-risk’ Veterans undergoing Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA) who attended our 1-day Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT) workshop had less postoperative pain and opioid use compared to those who had surgery alone. This intensive 1-



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day ACT workshop is designed to enhance acceptance-based coping and reduce behavioral avoidance.

The **current study** is a 4-year multisite randomized controlled trial of ‘at-risk’ Veterans undergoing TKA. Each month, we recruit 7-8 Veterans who are randomly assigned to attend either an ACT plus education workshop or Attention Control (which focuses on education, resources and support). The primary aim is to compare ACT to Attention Control on key postoperative outcomes: 1) pain intensity and functioning; 2) anxiety and depressive symptoms; and 3) opioid use.

Project 3: THRIVE: Targeting HIV Retention and Improved Viral Load through Engagement

The **overall aim** of this project is to develop an effective intervention that will lead out-of-care persons with HIV to re-engage in HIV treatment and self-care.

This project will 1) adapt an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) intervention for use with hospitalized, out-of-care persons living with HIV (PWH); 2) pilot the intervention with 10 hospitalized PWH; 3) refine the intervention based on feedback from the 10 PWH; 4) test the refined ACT intervention, compared to Usual Care, in a randomized control trial of 70 PWH. Feasibility and acceptability are the primary outcomes of interest.

Institution and Location: Baylor College of Medicine- Center for Innovation Quality Effectiveness and Safety; Houston Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Project timeframe (2 semesters is standard; 1 semester options also available beginning Fall 2020): 2 semesters

Prerequisite training: Students with the following interests/experience might consider this project, although anyone interested in mental health and the role that mental health plays on daily functioning and/or the bio-psycho-social model of medical education would be a reasonable fit: Psychology or social science majors, communication (health communication), or philosophy (applied). Students should be enthusiastic, organized, detail-oriented, self-motivated, punctual, professional, willing to be flexible and adaptable (no two days in the ACT on Health lab are the same!), and have excellent communication skills. Most of the projects in the ACT on Health lab are nested within the Veteran’s Affairs (VA) Medical Center and require completion of additional VA mandated trainings and procuring a WOC (Without Compensation) appointment. Guidance on this will be provided and can happen concurrently while working on non-VA projects in the lab.

Knowledge and skills student can expect to gain: Insight into how psychotherapy clinical trials are implemented, the day to day work of testing the effectiveness of psychotherapies, how to



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recruit patients for clinical trials over the phone and through networking with community partners, how to conduct clinical interviews to assess for psychopathology and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), how to complete follow-up assessments, how to work with tracking databases and data collection portals for data entry and data checking, development of intervention manuals, and conducting literature reviews.

Expectations of student (Rice University requirements are listed):

- The student must devote 8 hours per week to the project (consistent with a 3-credit course) and will develop a timeline of activities in collaboration with supervisor(s). The student will meet at least monthly with the faculty supervisor(s) to evaluate progress.

Expectations of PIs/project sponsors:

- The projects should be designed with the academic rigor of Rice University in mind, and abide by the U.S. Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act for unpaid internships. Mid-semester and final supervisor evaluations will be submitted to evaluate student's professional progress. Complete details found here: [Project Sponsor Eligibility](#).