Featured AFWH Graduate

Dr. Cait McLean, PhD Clinical Psychology – AFWH 2023 graduate and women’s health researcher at the VA Central Western Massachusetts

The AFWH program was extremely formative for my growth and identity as a clinical scientist. Reflecting on my time, below is some advice that I would give my past self from the start.

Seek multiple mentors. Mentors’ varied perspectives and guidance shape your training goals and career path, they support new opportunities and prioritization for long-term goals. Mentor experiences also help you recognize that there are many viable pathways to a fruitful career.

Mentor, supervise, and teach. These skills will be invaluable as future leaders in women’s health.

Keep your options open and welcome a potential pivot. If two(!) mentors send you the same job posting, apply, even if you aren’t actively looking and all in on the CDA. It might be the perfect role.

Take care of yourself and (try to) avoid burnout. Fellowship is exciting but encompasses stress, rejection (e.g., papers, grants, jobs), and transition. Have a hobby, spend time with loved ones, get support from other fellows, and have some fun!

Congratulations and welcome to fellowship!

Featured AFWH Graduate

Dr. Courtney Broadfoot, PhD, MS, CCC-SLP – AFWH graduate at the Madison VA Medical Center and Assistant Professor University of South Alabama in the Department of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology

The AFWH has been an excellent experience and I am grateful to have been even a small part of the VA organization. This fellowship provided me an important opportunity to translate my skills from my doctoral program, develop new ideas and research questions, and has left me well-prepared to transition to tenure-track position at an academic institution. I was fortunate to learn from and collaborate with other AFWH fellows, incredible researchers, clinicians, and mentors that I hope to continue to work with throughout my career.

My tip to new fellows is this: Be brave! Don’t be afraid to try something new. It may not be something you have done before but it may be something you end up really enjoying. Next, think critically! Now is a protected time to develop your own thoughts and ideas! Think about the areas that really interest you and drive your research forward in that direction. And finally, ask questions! You’re still learning and as part of this fellowship, you will have an amazing group of mentors that are eager to help you - their advice is invaluable!
Report on Hot Off the Press

Dr. Kristen Howard, a fellow at Milwaukee, had the following papers published and presentations:

**Publications**

**Presentations**

Dr. Kellia Hansmann, a fellow at Madison, had several presentations:


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Dr. Cindy Chang, a fellow at San Diego, received the VA Center for Excellence in Stress and Mental Health (CESAMH) Pilot Funding Award grant of $1,700 for study entitled, “Development of Qnnections: A Novel Theory-Driven Suicide Prevention Intervention for LGBTQ+ Veterans”. Dr. Chang also had several presentations and papers published:

**Publications**


**Presentations**


Dr. Whitney Livingston, a fellow at Boston, had several presentations and papers published:

**Publications**


**Presentations**

- **Livingston, W. S.**,* Barnes, M. L.,* **Street, A. E.**, & Simpson, T. L. (2022, November). *Ethnic and racial representation in randomized controlled trials for co-occurring PTSD and alcohol/substance use treatments*. Poster presentation at the annual meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Atlanta, GA. *Denotes co-first authors

- Barnes, M. L. & **Livingston, W. S.** (2022, November). *MST and Veterans of Color: What we know, what we don't, and clinical considerations*. Invited talk, oral co-presentation for the Seattle VA Intimate Partner Violence/Military Sexual Trauma Series, Seattle, WA.

We are proud to **highlight** all names of current AFWH fellows, alumni, and site directors who contributed to these publications!

*Abbreviated citations. For full citations, please follow the embedded links or visit PubMed for most recent publications.*
Elizabeth (Liza) Alpert, Ph.D., Advanced Fellow at Boston

Dr. Alpert’s research focuses on processes of treatment engagement and therapeutic change in evidence-based treatments for PTSD. The goal of her program of research is to use therapy process knowledge to develop interventions to optimize patient outcomes in PTSD treatments.

Dr. Alpert’s research has made a difference for VA clinicians and the Veterans they serve by increasing understanding of the active ingredients in evidence-based PTSD treatments, and her clinical work has also made a direct impact in the lives of women Veterans with PTSD.

Anita Ganti, MD, MS Ed, Advanced Fellow 2023 Graduate from Pittsburgh

Dr. Ganti has focused on developing a weight management communication skills curriculum for the University of Pittsburgh medical students who rotate through the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. This curriculum includes foundational knowledge about how to diagnose and treat obesity, but also discusses how to take an appropriate weight history and develop SMART goals with patients. Finally, it incorporates skills-based practice so that students can practice initiating these conversations that can be sensitive and receive real feedback from standardized patients in a low stakes environment to improve their skills.

Medical students who have taken this curriculum have rotated at the VA during their Adult Outpatient Medicine Clerkship and have been able to directly apply the knowledge and skills from this curriculum to Veteran patient care.

Kristen Howard, PhD, Advanced Fellow at Milwaukee

Dr. Howard’s work has been centered on the interpersonal correlates of psychopathology, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder. She has examined the impact of support persons on Veterans in evidence-based treatments for PTSD and run a psychoeducation workshop to help family members support their Veteran with PTSD.

By providing support partners of Veterans with mental health issues with education and resources, we can better help Veterans get established with care and effective treatments and reduce the burden associated with symptoms of PTSD or other mental health problems.

We are proud to highlight these fellows and the great impacts their work has on the women Veteran population!

Connect With Us…and Each Other!

Do you share your accomplishments and professional activities on social media? Be sure to use our hashtag on all platforms: #VAWHFellowship

Build your network by adding your social media handles to our private SharePoint so we, other fellows, and Site Directors can follow you on social media! We’d love to see what you all are up to and re tweet or share it, so you get more visibility!

Be sure to connect with Dr. Maddie Alvarez and Kate West via LinkedIn to be added to our AFWH Fellow and Alumni Group on LinkedIn!
Trainings and Resources

HSR&D Cyber seminar Spotlight on Women’s Health offers several archived presentations on women Veterans:
- July 2023: Women Veterans’ Experiences of VHA Care: Intersection of Sex and Race-Ethnicity in the National Veteran Health Equity Report presented by Kerry Beckman, PhD, MPH; Jessica Breland, PhD; Donna Washington, MD, MPH (Former Los Angeles Site Director).
- June 2023: Sleep Disorders in Women Veterans presented by Jennifer Martin, PhD, D.Psych.
- May 2023: Reproductive Health Needs and Organization of Care for Women and Gender-Diverse Veterans: Trends Over Time presented by Kristin Haeger, MPH, MAT; Amanda Johnson, MD, FACOG; Jodie Katon, PhD, MS.

Professional Development and Training – Check out The Grant Application Writer’s Workbook (Crawford) and FacultyDiversity.org resources!

The Women’s Health Roadmap promotes tailored strategies for key stakeholders to implement and optimize Women’s Health PACT in their settings. Read more about it here.

AFWH Handbook is available to all fellows on the SharePoint Drive. If you did not receive a copy, please email us and we will send you a copy. If you have any questions/concerns about the AFWH Handbook or the Fellowship and wish to set up a conference call with Dr. Alvarez, please email us and we would be happy to discuss any questions or concerns.

Women’s Mental Health On-Demand Trainings - Please click on WMH On-Demand Trainings to access a full list of available courses.

View the 2023 Women’s Health Campaign Calendar and Resources here! August is Post Pregnancy Care Health Month. Check out the SharePoint to learn more!

Check Out These Women’s Health Outreach Videos! These videos address resources available for Women Veterans to include the Call Center, Mental Health, My HealththeVet, & more!

Office of Women’s Health sponsored educational offerings are available on the OWH SharePoint site. There are various women’s health topics such as caring for women Veterans.

The VA supports multiple Veteran-centric apps that can help you take care of Veterans. Visit the app store for a full list.

The AFWH library has a collection of books available for you! We have books related to research, medical education, leadership, bias, and anti-racism. Click here to see the full list. Many are available at your site or send an email and we will mail you a copy.

Please send an email if you have events or resources you would like to share.

*Many of these links require VA VPN. If you are having trouble accessing a document, please reach out and we can assist.

AFWH Advanced Fellowship in Women's Health

Contact us at the AFWH HUB via email or phone 608-280-7000 and ask for Dr. Madelyn Alvarez or Kate West.
Visit our website at https://afwh.wisc.edu