



Department of
Veterans Affairs

Medical Center

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Health Headlines

For Immediate Release

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Connecting with Patients using Dance and Movement Therapy

Have you ever heard the phrase, "I know what he's thinking; I can read him like a book?" Perhaps you've never given much thought to the truth in those words, but the same can't be said for Allison Winters, Dance and Movement Therapist at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center. In fact, Allison wrote a Master's Thesis which explored the subjects of emotion, expression and the powers of observation.

A trained psychotherapist, with a Masters degree in Psychology, Allison says she always had a passion for dance. While in college studying psychology, Allison participated in an internship in Dance Therapy and discovered the strong therapeutic connections that extended beyond the spoken word. She decided to explore the connection further and went on to receive an additional Master's degree in Dance Therapy.

The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) describes Dance Therapy as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of individuals." As a member of the Recreation Therapy Department, Allison uses dance, posture, expression and movement, as a means to connect with patients, who otherwise may not be able to communicate their feelings.

"Socialization and expression are important human functions," explains Allison, "For whatever reason, some patients may not have the words, or feel comfortable expressing themselves. My training helps me connect in a non-verbal level and allows them to explore and express their feelings more fully."

Allison participates as a member of the Community Living Center treatment team at the James Peters VA, and joins social workers, dieticians, doctors, nurses and others to create an environment where all of the patients needs are addressed. Weekly team meetings include input from all of these professionals, as well as, the patient themselves and their family members. In this way, the medical center employs a comprehensive approach to treatment of the veteran patient.

In October of 2009, Allison travelled to Portland, Oregon to attend the ADTA Annual Conference where she accepted their Annual Research Award and their Journalism Award for her published article: Emotion, Embodiment, and Mirror Neurons in Dance/Movement Therapy: A Connection Across Disciplines.

For more information related to this story or the James J. Peters VA Medical Center, please contact Jim Connell, Public Affairs Officer, at 718.584.9000, Ext. 6620.

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Photos:



“Allison Winter Accepts Award at ADTA Annual Conference”

L to R: Susan Kleinman (Marian Chace Foundation Trustee), Allison F. Winters (NYC, Recipient of the award) and Sharon Chaiklin (President of Marian Chace Foundation)



“Allison Winter works with patients”

L to R: Wendell Peters, Townsend Troland, Arthur Schiff and therapist, Allison Winters.