



Learning to  
Apply  
Mindfulness to  
Pain

**Newsletter #4**

**Connecting with the LAMP Study**

### Letter from the LAMP Principal Investigator

It gives me great pleasure to bring out our fourth LAMP newsletter. We are getting incredible participation on our surveys. This is fabulous news because high survey participation is a big part of a strong study. The LAMP team is so grateful for all your efforts, which will help Veterans and other folks with pain. The LAMP study is part of a much bigger initiative called the Pain Management Collaboratory, which supports research in pain management for Veterans and military service members. Learn more about this initiative at this website: <https://painmanagementcollaboratory.org/>.

Our newsletter features interviews with Greg Serpa, a leading teacher of mindfulness in the VA and member of the LAMP study team, and Becky, a member of our LAMP Veteran Advisory Panel. We also have a section on sleep and highlight an excellent podcast series from VA Whole Health — VA’s cutting-edge approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Check out the Whole Health website for tons of other resources.



**Make sure to check your email for your upcoming survey!**



We will also make these newsletters available on our website: <https://lamp.umn.edu>. Feel free to reach out to us at 877-467-5079 or email us at [vhaminLAMP@va.gov](mailto:vhaminLAMP@va.gov). We’d love to know what you think.

Best wishes,

Dr. Diana Burgess

### **RESOURCES FOR WHOLE HEALTH (videos, podcasts, and articles):**

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/tag/livewholehealth/>

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/features/index.asp>

### LAMP STUDY TIMELINE

Phase 1: May 15, 2018 – May 14, 2020

- Develop materials ✓
- Pilot the LAMP STUDY ✓

Phase 2: May 15, 2020 - May 14, 2024

- Recruit Veterans to participate → Ongoing
- Veterans participate in LAMP interventions → Ongoing
- Collect survey data → Ongoing
- Analyze survey data
- Publish results for academic audiences
- Distribute results to Veterans and broader audiences
- Conduct “implementation analysis” to learn how to translate this study into real life

## Whole Health and Pain Management Podcast

The pain management podcast series is based on the VA Whole Health model of care and the Circle of Health and was developed by the VA to provide education and tools for those suffering with chronic pain. This series will give you skills and knowledge around self-care and complementary and integrative treatments that you can incorporate into your life to reduce the impact of chronic pain and improve your health and well-being.

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/podcast/painmanagement/index.asp>



## Q & A with Greg Serpa, Member of LAMP Study Team

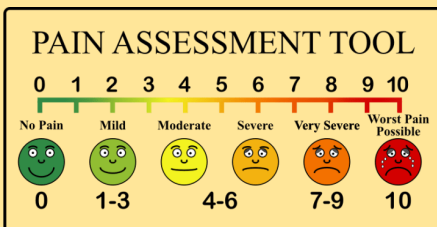
### Q. Can you tell us why you wanted to be part of the LAMP study?

A. So many of our healthcare treatments are designed around the reduction in symptoms. Or to say it another way, they are designed to “get rid of sickness.” But I am interested in enhancing health. Veterans may come to mindfulness looking for less anxiety or more ease in managing pain but what we see as an additional benefit... well-being and joy are enhanced. This isn’t only about reducing symptoms, but living more fully.



### Q. Why should Veterans consider participating in LAMP?

A. Participation in research projects like LAMP helps to advance the care Veterans receive and have earned. Expensive medications and imaging machines create the illusion that advances in healthcare are technological and ever more costly. But sometimes simple things can be transformational. And we believe the LAMP study is one of those things. Your participation may help other Veterans dealing with pain who are looking for a non-pill approach to relief.



### Q. What would you say to a Veteran who feels isolated or hopeless about his or her pain?

A. Veterans with chronic pain often feel a sense of isolation. But you are not alone. Veterans report more frequent chronic pain and higher intensity pain than non-Veterans. Common humanity, or the idea that your experience is shared with so many others, can help.

### Q. What would you recommend to Veterans, to help them with their pain?

A. Whole Health is the VA program intended to equip and empower Veterans to live their best life. The Circle of Health provides an opportunity to explore the connections between various aspects of your life and your overall wellbeing.

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-resources/whole-health-basics.asp>

Chronic pain can rob you of so much including physical activity and interpersonal connections. By working the circle and doing what you can to enhance your life, you can start on the path towards living the life you want.



## The Importance of Sleep

Sleep affects pain. You may have noticed that when you don't get enough sleep, your pain tends to be worse. The good news is that getting more sleep can improve your pain.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends an average of eight hours of sleep per night for adults, but sometimes it's still a challenge to achieve the restful night we dream of. Below are tips on how to get better sleep:



- Don't stay up in bed if you're having a hard time falling asleep. The brain associates the activities you do with the place you do them. So if you toss and turn, read a book, or play on your phone in bed while trying to fall asleep, your brain may start to think these activities (rather than actual sleep) are what the bedroom is meant for.



- You can't make up for a sleep deficit by sleeping longer the next night. Your body does not have the capacity to get back the benefits of lost sleep simply by sleeping more. Try your best to go to bed and wake up around the same time every day.
- Cut the caffeine. Even if you find you can fall asleep after drinking a cup of coffee after dinner, the caffeine can still influence your brain. As a result, your quality of sleep may be lower and you may wake up feeling unrefreshed.
- Still need more help? Many VA's offer Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia. CBT-I is an evidence-based psychotherapy that helps improve the quality of sleep and helps people sleep longer.

## What do you like to do for better sleep?



10:00pm Bedtime



6:00am Wake-Up



Study funded by the Department of Defense. For more information visit the LAMP website at: <https://lamp.umn.edu>

Lead Researcher: Dr. Diana Burgess

## **Q&A with Becky, a LAMP Veteran Engagement Panel Member:**

**Q. Can you tell us about who you are and why pain research is important to you?**

A. I'm Rebecca Keller, Air Force veteran and chronic pain sufferer. After retiring from the military, I became an occupational therapist because I wanted to help others continue to lead meaningful lives in spite of being diagnosed with a life altering illness, condition or disease. Pain research is important to me, personally and broadly, to continue to advance the knowledge that allows chronic pain survivors like myself to fully participate in daily activities, whether those activities are mundane and routine or fun and exciting.



**Q. Why should Veterans consider participating in LAMP?**

A. Mindfulness (the "M" in LAMP) has a validated research history of breaking the cycle of pain and the negative impact pain has on participation in activities we want (or have) to do. If you feel like pain still has power over your thoughts and actions, in spite of your current regimen of pain relief, then you have nothing to lose (and everything to gain) with LAMP participation.

**Q. What would you say to a Veteran who feels isolated or hopeless about his or her pain?**

A. Research has shown us that everyone's pain experience is unique, but the journey is definitely shared. The variety of research projects being conducted across the VA nationally, often in partnership with civilian institutions, is mind blowing! There are hundreds of researchers passionately trying to make a difference. Please continue to partner with your VA primary care team and continue to advocate for yourself because the health care professionals can't help you if they aren't aware of the true impact pain is having on your life.

**Q. What would you recommend to Veterans, to help them with their pain?**

A. Don't give up looking for pain solutions and thinking "you've tried everything". New pain relief and pain management options, along with refined techniques/implementation methods are constantly in the pipeline. Every individual's pain is unique and the VA health care team is committed to finding the solutions that work for you. While there are no promises for a completely pain-free existence, there are really dedicated medical providers, counselors, and researchers who want to help reduce the negative influence that pain has on your day-to-day participation in life.

**Q. Is there anything else you would like to say to Veterans with chronic pain?**

A. Be unguarded and vocal with your VA and community providers about your pain levels, be open to new options for pain relief beyond prescription medications, try every option offered until you find the key to managing your unique pain, and then get out there and live life!

**We'd love to hear from you. Call us at 877-467-5079 or email us at [vhaminLAMP@va.gov](mailto:vhaminLAMP@va.gov).**

**Check out our website at <https://lamp.umn.edu>.**

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