

# Brittany Canady, PhD — Clinical Psychologist

## TREATING PAIN, WHEREVER IT RESIDES

Sometimes it's good to remember that the mind and body are connected — meaning that psychological factors can affect how a person feels physically.

For clinical psychologist Brittany Canady, PhD, helping patients make that link allows her to combine her interests in both medicine and psychology.

"My role comes in helping us step back and look at our treatment plans and try to understand the whole person, not just what meds they're on or what procedure to do next," says Canady.

As a psychologist at the Huntington VA Medical Center, Canady is part of a multidisciplinary team that takes a holistic approach to treating patients. She conducts cognitive behavioral therapy with many of her patients to identify underlying psychological issues, such as traumatic experiences, that could affect how they manage their pain.

For example, treating depression and other psychological factors in people before pursuing remedies for their physical ailments can often make a difference in how well they recuperate and manage their pain. Addressing the psychological side first can also improve patients' ability to comply with their care plans after they've left Canady's office.

## BEYOND MEDICATION AND SURGERY

Canady's research explores whether education can expand perspectives about treatment options other than medication or surgery, such as psychotherapy, hypnosis, biofeedback or physical therapy.

"I often see patients who say, 'I tried physical therapy and it didn't work for me,'" she says. Canady then explains the many kinds of physical therapies available and encourages patients to be open to the idea that what didn't work before may be an ideal treatment now.

It's the variety of issues Canady's patients face and the challenge of identifying the brain/body connection that keeps her interested in what the next day will bring. By sharing what she knows about psychological and medical science with her patients, she knows she is giving them access to additional treatment options and the potential for improved treatment outcomes.

Working as part of an integrated care team also helps those patients who might feel uncomfortable about working with a psychologist overcome those barriers. "Some people wouldn't be comfortable seeing a psychologist in a traditional mental health setting, but they will see you because you're in a hospital or pain clinic," Canady says. "You become part of their medical treatment team."



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### CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Psychologists who provide clinical or counseling services assess and treat mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. They use the science of psychology to treat complex human problems and promote change. They also promote resilience and help people discover their strengths.

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