



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System
400 Veterans Avenue
Biloxi, MS 39531

September 13, 2021

In Reply Refer To:

Clinical Health Psychology/ Behavioral Sleep Medicine
Behavioral Health Service Line (116)
400 Veteran's Avenue
Gulf Coast Veteran's Health Care System
Biloxi, MS 39531

Dr. Christina McCrae
Dr. Fiona Barwick
SBSM Executive Committee

Members of the SBSM Executive Committee:

It is indeed my pleasure to write this letter of support on behalf of Dr. Melanie Leggett who is applying for Fellow Status with the Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine. I am a clinical health psychologist and behavioral sleep specialist currently working for the Gulf Coast Veteran's Health Care System in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Unlike more traditional letters or recommendation/support, I want to begin with the personal! Melanie and I became acquainted 10 years ago, in August 2011. Like Melanie, my experiences with the clinical skills and activities that would later become recognized as the discipline of Behavioral Sleep Medicine, both began in, and served me well during my career as a USAF psychologist from 1996-2007. Upon retirement from the USAF in 2007, I began work for the VA, excited by the prospect of continuing to use my "sleep psychology" skills with my fellow Veterans. Unfortunately, over the next three years I became increasingly frustrated and disillusioned with what I perceived to be the relative chaos and general lack of the availability of evidence-based approaches toward the assessment and treatment of sleep difficulties within the VA.

Then in the summer of 2011, I was invited to participate in the VA's CBT-I evidenced based treatment training program – to learn to do CBT-I the "VA way". Following the 4-day didactic portion of the training, a psychologist from the Durham VA, Melanie Means (Leggett) was assigned as my VA training consultant for the 4-month consultation period. And what an absolute blessing that was. Her clear expertise in field, combined with her engaging personality, empathy, humor, overall teaching ability, and in depth knowledge and experience as a sleep clinician within the VA changed everything for me. My frustration and disillusionment vanished, replaced by excitement and enthusiasm. In early 2011 I was close to leaving the VA. Because of Melanie I stayed! Over the last decade, as a direct result of Melanie's influence and mentorship, I have been able, not only to survive as a BSMer in the VA, but to thrive. Hundreds of Veterans

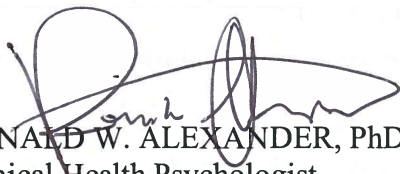
with disordered sleep have benefitted from what we now offer at GCVHCS. In addition, many of our psychology interns and post-doctoral fellows have entered the field of BSM.

Melanie was responsible for my acceptance as a VA CBT-I training consultant in 2012. Later she encouraged me to pursue certification through the DBSM, consoled me after my initial failure, and cheered me on until I finally succeeded in 2020. Over the years, she has always been my “go to” sleep colleague. Whenever I get the most complex BSM cases, and I get some wild ones, it is Melanie Leggett that I reach out to for guidance. This has happened both through individual consultation (it seems her “virtual” door is always open when I ask) as well as through the incredible training she has provided through many invited lectures and seminars within platforms such as the VA CBT-I Advanced Practice webinar, VA VISN 20 Sleep-VA webinar, SBSM Practice and Consultation webinar, SBSM Early Career Consultation webinar, and many, many others.

The instructions pertaining to these “letters of support” for an applicant for SBSM Fellow Status indicate the letter should attest to “the exceptional contributions the applicant has made to the BSM field or society.” I believe Melanie’s incredible CV and the other materials she will submit within her application speak for themselves in regard to her “exceptional contributions” to the field. I believe it is important we always remember that in a field such as ours, the amazing accomplishments of great people tend to be built on a solid foundation of one-to-one, person-to-person interactions. My goal in this letter was to provide one example – a very personal one, of how Melanie Leggett has contributed to our discipline and our community at large. One can only imagine the exponential impact Melanie has had – even if only a fraction of her interactions – whether psychology interns and fellows, medical fellows, BSM or sleep medicine colleagues – bore fruit, produced outcome, as occurred in my specific circumstance, our BSM community is much the better for it.

In conclusion, I am extremely excited that Melanie has chosen to apply for status as a Fellow within the Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine. I can think of no person more deserving of that honor, and I offer my highest endorsement and support fully and without any reservation.

If you have any additional questions or would like additional information please don’t hesitate to contact me at the telephone number or email listed in my signature block below.



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