Tar Heel Footprints in Health Care

A periodic feature that recognizes individuals who improve the accessibility to and quality of health care in North Carolina

Wei Li Fang, PhD

On recognition of the unmet behavioral health needs of service members, veterans, and their families, the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, along with partner organizations, formed the Governor’s Focus on Servicemembers, Veterans, and Their Families, to help ensure the existence of an integrated system of health care, educational services, employment resources, community support, and mental health and substance abuse services for these populations. Wei Li Fang has been a driving force in this effort.

Fang is director of research and evaluation at the Governor’s Institute on Substance Abuse, one of the partner organizations of the Governor’s Focus. Fang seeks out information on resources and potential opportunities for supporting military personnel and their families and disseminates this information to individuals who can best put it into action. According to Michael Lancaster, former cochair of the Governor’s Focus, “Hardly a day goes by when [Fang] doesn’t bring something new to the table.” Flo Stein, current cochair of the Governor’s Focus, adds that Fang “is always thinking one step ahead” as she works to build and maintain partnerships, using her technical skills to garner funding to support efforts of the institute. Sara McEwen, executive director of the Governor’s Institute, notes that Fang “has played a pivotal role in bringing millions of dollars into the state of North Carolina, through her expertise in grant writing, project leadership, and project evaluation.” These grants have supported several activities in the state, such as assisting homeless veterans and training health care professionals.

Fang’s strong desire to help military personnel and their families drives her tireless efforts. “Dr. Fang has great passion for the work she is doing for veterans, service members, and their families,” says McEwen. “While Li has worked on a variety of programs throughout the years, the work on behalf of veterans and military members has truly ignited something special in her.” Harold Kudler, current cochair of the Governor’s Focus, remarks that Fang’s “vision and organizational skills have kept the program growing and going all these years,” adding that “other programs have tended to drift because they didn’t have the intelligence and dedication behind them that Li brings.”

Fang endeavors to transfer her knowledge and skills to other individuals and organizations. “Through her leadership, supervision, and mentorship of younger staff, she is fostering the development of an equally committed and passionate workforce,” says McEwen. Fang also works with a number of North Carolina organizations to expand the state’s ability to implement evidence-based practices in the areas of mental health and substance abuse.

Fang received a BA in psychology, an MEd in health education, and a PhD in educational evaluation from the University of Virginia. Before joining the Governor’s Institute, she worked in various faculty positions at the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill School of Medicine. NCMJ

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