

TIPS FOR PAOs PROMOTING FACILITY RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Advancing VA Research Communications

Among the most positive news stories VA can promote are those related to VA Research and the numerous strides being made to improve Veterans' health. However, connecting with your facility's research team, translating complex scientific terminology into accessible language, and determining the best communications tools and audience for these stories can be daunting to public affairs officers. Also challenging is helping VA researchers to evaluate the level of public interest in research, building their comfort level with self-promotion, and understanding how best to use media in promoting research studies. The Public Affairs Officers-Academic Affiliates Outreach Committee has created this tip sheet to assist public affairs officers in advancing research communications at their facilities.

Get Plugged In

- Start by getting to know the team at your facility's Office of Research. Ask for some time with the Research Chief and inquire as to the types of studies currently underway, recent publications by research staff, and what project he/she is most proud of doing.
- Get buy-in and support from your hospital's Chief of Staff (COS) and find out what your COS believes would be newsworthy.
- Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) manager (Human Subjects Research Studies), the compliance officer, and the administrative support group to indicate your interest in potential stories.
- Ask to attend the clinical managers' meetings (often called the Medical Executive Committee or "MEC" meeting). You'll learn more about research projects underway and will be able to let the entire medical team know you want to highlight their projects. You will find that these clinical managers will begin to seek you out when they have potential good news stories.
- If your medical center sponsors "Noon Conferences" for medical students, it may be worthwhile to sit-in occasionally, as discussions often cover recently published research advancing health care.

Know Your Facility's Research Portfolio

- Explore technology research underway at your facility. Innovations in electronic health records, laser surgery (such as daVinci robotic surgical equipment), new Apps, and other health technology projects are often of interest to the media.
- Visit VA's Research website www.research.va.gov and Facebook page www.facebook.com/varesearch to learn about national initiatives and to determine if your facility's team is working on related projects.
- Seek out research projects related to high-level VA priorities such as Women's Health, Rural Health, Mental Health, and Post Deployment Health (including PTSD and TBI).
<https://vaww.portal2.va.gov/sites/VHACommunications/SitePages/CommSite.aspx>

Build the Basics

- Begin by profiling your research team in facility newsletters, on the web, and in social media. Include a photo, a brief biography, length of time at VA, and short descriptions of the kind of research they undertake.
- Be sure to include updates on your facility's research activities at year-end in your annual report. And, look for other opportunities to spotlight VA research throughout the year.
- Visit VHA CommSite, the SharePoint site that is a one-stop resource for communicators.
- Understand the affiliate relationship and get ahead of stories related to cooperative research. Get to know the public affairs officers at your affiliated medical schools and hospitals.

Be a Resource

- Offer to support the research team in recruiting subjects for studies through written, video, and social outlets (i.e., Million Veteran Program). Remember all recruitment strategies must be approved by IRB.
- Assist the Office of Research in planning for the annual VA Research Week activities at your facility.