

2010 VA Research Week kickoff activities spotlight 85 years of discovery, innovation, advancement

The long and accomplished history of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Research program was spotlighted during 2010 VA Research Week kickoff activities in Washington, D.C., April 21-23.

Activities in the nation's capital launched this year's national VA Research Week, themed "85 Years of Discovery, Innovation, and Advancement for Veterans," with events held around the nation April 26-29.

VA Research Week is an annual event which recognizes VA research discoveries and innovations that advance health care for Veterans and the nation. Research Week also celebrates the Veterans who make advancement possible through their participation in VA research studies.

Kickoff events, hosted by VA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) in collaboration with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and Friends of VA

Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) organizations, took place at VA Central Office and the Richmond VA Medical Center.

VA's Chief Research and Development Officer, Joel Kupersmith, MD, was host and moderator for several events and discussion panels during the Washington kickoff activities. "Research is very important to the future of medicine," said Kupersmith. "Research in the VA is how the future of health care will be delivered to Veterans."

Leaders Speak Out

As Research Week approached, members of Congress commented on the contributions of VA's research program for both Veterans and the nation as a whole:

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Photos by John Borlik/VA R&D Communications

Veteran Charles Eggleston (holding microphone) tells his story as a VA research participant while fellow Veterans (from left to right) Stephen Cochran, Daniel Stebbins, Joan Furey, and Lilliana Ariza listen. Cochran, who is also a country music artist, moderated the Veteran panel, entitled "Hope for the Journey," to help Veteran research participants explain how they benefit from VA research.



Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Research and Development Officer Joel Kupersmith, MD, speaks to more than 400 Veterans at the Richmond VA Medical Center April 23.

Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, said, "For eight-and-a-half decades, VA Research has helped not only those who served in the nation's armed forces, it has yielded vital breakthroughs that have benefited all Americans, Veterans and non-Veterans alike," Akaka said. "Looking back, we applaud VA Research's many award-winning discoveries; looking forward, we expect that its greatest days are yet to come.

"Please join me in commending the men and women in VA Research," Akaka concluded.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki also lauded the VA Research program.

"As we mark the 85th year of VA's Research program, we celebrate our innovative researchers who helped turn so many hopes into realities," Shinseki said. "VA's forward-looking contributions to medical research continue to bring life-improving treatments and pharmaceuticals to our Veterans and the nation. We will maintain our steadfast commitment to lead the way as we transform VA into a 21st-century organization."

VA's Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Robert A. Petzel, also commented on VA research.

"VA Research's innovations and discoveries assure that VA health care is responsive to the needs of Veterans and their caregivers and continues to stay at the forefront of medical care and treatment," said Petzel.

VA Research on the Hill

The 2010 Research Week kickoff activities began on Capitol Hill April 29, when lawmakers, VA researchers, and Veteran research participants met at the Dirksen Senate Office Building for a congressional reception sponsored by Veteran Service Organizations and Friends of VA member organizations.

During this nighttime event, Veteran and country music artist Stephen Cochran debuted a music video produced by VA's Office of Research and Development. The song, entitled "Hope," was co-written by Cochran specifically for ORD and featured his band, the New Country Outlaws, and a Veteran choir.

Research advances discussed included momentous achievements in the fields of genomic medicine and comparative effectiveness research; and critical progress in addressing other health-related concerns important to Veterans, such as traumatic brain injury, posttraumatic stress disorder, Parkinson's disease, cancer, mental health, prosthetics, pain management, and sensory loss.

VA Deputy Secretary Delivers Keynote Address

The second day of 2010 Research Week kickoff activities took place at a research forum at VA Central Office and featured a keynote address by Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs M. Scott Gould.

"At this forum is a constellation of research stars whose work has illuminated the darkest corners of human suffering; has cast a bright light onto the stages of countless microscopes; and has revealed the pathways for some of medical science's greatest achievements," said Gould.

"The rising tide of research lifts the prospects of better health for all Veterans—from the aging warriors of the Greatest Generation, to the youngest soldiers of the latest generation," Gould continued. "Through R&D's main research services—Biomedical Laboratory, Clinical Sciences, Health Services, and Rehabilitation—you are demonstrating every day that healthcare is both an art and a science, each complementing the other to consistently deliver the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

"Because clinical care and research occur together under one roof, VA brings scientific discovery from the



Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health, speaks to the crowd at VA Central Office as part of 2010 VA Research Week kickoff activities April 22.

patient's bedside to the laboratory and back, making this program one of VA's most effective tools for improving the care of Veterans. VA will continue to play a leading role in the advancement of clinical medical knowledge," he concluded.

Awards Presentations

The following researchers were presented awards by Dr. Robert Petzel, Under Secretary for Health:

- Robert L. Ruff, MD, PhD - *Paul B. Magnuson Award*
- Edward J. Weinman, MD, and Michael D. Norenberg, MD - *Middleton Award*
- William C. Duckworth, MD, and William C. Cushman, MD - *Barnwell Award*
- Alexander Sox-Harris, PhD, and Melina Kibbe, MD, - *Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers*
- Mary K. Goldstein, MD, MS - *Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research*

Featured Speaker



In addition to VA researcher presentations and Veteran research participant discussion panels, VA Research Week kickoff activities also included a featured speaker at VA Central Office April 22.

As a spokesperson for "Family Fun" on TV and radio, Lee Woodruff talked about parenting and family life. In 2007, Woodruff joined ABC's "Good Morning America" as a lifestyle and family contributor. Her first book, *In an Instant*, was co-authored with her husband, Bob, and helped put a face on the serious issue of traumatic brain injury, which affects many returning war Veterans and millions of other Americans.

"With the volume of returning wounded Veterans and our greater understanding of combat stress and PTSD [posttraumatic stress disorder], it's more critical than

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ever to support research in the area of the caregiver,” said Woodruff. “When one person is injured, it’s really the entire family who is impacted and the burden falls on the caregiver.

“VA Research in this area is not only important for our Veteran families, but it has the huge potential to impact the civilian world as well,” she said. “And that’s good news for the one in four Americans who are currently caregivers.”

A list of all topics, speakers, and presentations from the event can be found at <http://www.research.va.gov/ResearchWeek/event-sched.cfm>.

Veteran Performs for Fellow Veterans

On the final day of 2010 Research Week kickoff activities, more than 400 Veterans at the Richmond VA Medical Center were treated to a performance by Veteran and country music artist Stephen Cochran and his band, The New Country Outlaws.



Veteran and country music artist Stephen Cochran (center) performs with his band, The New Country Outlaws, at the Richmond VA Medical Center.

The group also presented their latest music video “Hope,” to the crowd. The song, which was co-written by Cochran specifically for VA Research, highlights Cochran’s philosophy of inspiring hope for the nation’s disabled Veterans.

“With hope and the assistance of VA research I am where I am today. VA research is also helping me face my memories. I encourage all Veterans to have hope. VA Research is turning that hope into reality,” said Cochran.

VA Research Events Around the Nation

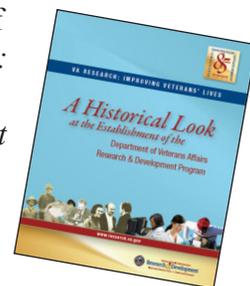
VA research facilities around the country held a variety of activities, ranging from open houses to show

off new administrative or laboratory space, to Veteran appreciation activities to honor and thank Veterans for their participation in research. Some facilities conducted research forums with keynote speakers, investigator presentations, and Veterans’ testimonials. Others showed research program slide shows, presented a variety of research awards, and displayed scientific posters, some with prizes as incentives.

VA’s Long History of Research

For more than 85 years, the Veterans Affairs Research and Development program has been improving Veterans’ lives through innovation and discovery that has led to advances in health care for Veterans and all Americans. The VA Research program, unique in that it is the only research program focused wholly on conducting groundbreaking research to meet the full spectrum of Veterans’ medical needs, is advantageously part of an integrated health care system with a state-of-the-art electronic health record.

During 2010 Research Week kickoff activities, a book titled *VA Research: Improving Veterans Lives, A Historical Look at the Establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs Research and Development Program* was released. The book, written by Marguerite T. Hays, MD, chronicles VA research from its inception in 1925 through the 1980s.



VA Research Resources

For more information about VA research, please visit www.research.va.gov/ResearchWeek. For questions or comments, e-mail Research.Publications@va.gov or contact:

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