



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, April 18, 2022 – 1:30 pm ET

Internal Teams Site: [Click Here](#)

1. Welcome

Rachel Ramoni, DMD, ScD

Dr. Ramoni welcomed attendees and highlighted the agenda. Items included ones related to the research enterprise transformation to be presented by leads of the respective initiatives.

2. ORD / Research Enterprise

Wendy Tenhula, PhD

• Enterprise transformation initiative updates

Dr. Tenhula provided a brief update on the VA Research Enterprise transformation efforts. The Research Enterprise SharePoint site was announced that will host resources designed to keep the Field informed about the progress of the initiatives and the wider Research Enterprise transformation.

Research Enterprise SharePoint corrected link attached below

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vacovhacomm/ORD-Research-Enterprise>

Further questions, concerns, or feedback about the SharePoint, the Research Enterprise can be submitted through the feedback form and email address. Any feedback submitted through the feedback form will be anonymous while messages sent through the email will enable us to respond to your questions and concerns directly. The anonymous feedback form is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ResearchEnterpriseFeedback>. The feedback email address is: VHAORDResearchEntFb@va.gov.

3. Technology Transfer Program (TTP) updates John Kaplan, PhD, JD, PE

- Provided an update on Incomplete Invention Disclosures.
- Updated on Royalty Revenue at \$6.3M.
- Announced promotion of Dr. Terri Hunter to a Regional Technology Transfer Specialists.

4. Finance Updates

Matthew Verna

- As of today, 96.3% of the Service ID's have been reported on the RAFT Q2 Expenditures Report. We received completed responses from 88 of 97 Stations, which is an extremely good turnout considering we have over 7,300 actively funded research projects! **Thank you for your efforts in getting this accomplished.**
- Mr. Verwiel sent out an email out this morning to notify the remaining stations that they will have until tomorrow, Tuesday April 19th to gain compliance. Once we close the report, we will be sharing the execution results with ORD leadership as well as each of the services. The Program Directors for each service will be asked to work with their Central Office budget analysts to identify unexecuted funding that should be returned and reallocated.
- Regarding the FY22 Budget, ORD received our final apportionment from VHA Finance last week. Our first priority was to release the ITA's (Initial Target Allowances) in-full to all stations, which was completed on Thursday and Friday of last week. Other than a few outliers, all Research ITA's have now been distributed out to the field. If you did not receive your ITA or have any questions on the distribution, please contact your Research Budget Analyst, AO or you can send an email to the ORDFinanceAction@va.gov group for assistance. I will add the mail group into the chat box for your convenience.

5. ORD Field Update

• IT Updates

Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD

Please continue to contact Dr. Grunfeld with questions or problems.

• Updates on HR

Tony Laracuente

- Centralized HR update: ORD is negotiating the final details for the Service Line Agreement. During the process we have found some critical issues that need consideration including who processes payroll, dual employees (FTE and Fee Basis), expiration date reports and HR communication. We are asking Waves 1-3 (VISN 20, 22, 2, 16, 19) to respond to a short survey which should take about 2-3 minutes to complete. The responses will help us develop action plans in each area.
- Clinical Research Coordinator: I have received recent inquiries regarding the GS 601 – 11 Clinical Research Coordinator and is it mandated for all situations. The answer is no. This PD was setup to remove the time to classify a PD where the majority or all duties conducted were similar to the nationally classified PD. There

is not a career ladder on this position because the position is to be used in support of research projects. The facilities are free to develop a GS 9 locally then convert to a new appointment based on the GS 11. Further information can be found on the ORD website. The URL is [Human Resources/Personnel \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/human-resources/personnel/). We are currently finalizing a Committee Manager PD that can be used for R&D, SRS, IACUC, IRB and can be multi encumbered.

6. Services updates and announcements

• RR&D Updates

Patricia A. Dorn, PhD

○ Paul B. Magnuson Award

The Paul B. Magnuson Award is presented annually to a VA RR&D investigator who exemplifies the entrepreneurship, humanitarianism, and dedication to veterans displayed by Dr. Magnuson during his career.

The award was established in 1998 in recognition of the importance of rehabilitation research within the VA Health Care System. The award consists of a one-time \$5,000 cash award to an individual, \$50,000 per year for three (3) years supplemental funding for their ongoing peer-reviewed research, and a celebratory plaque.

Nominations for the 2023 [Paul B. Magnuson Award](#) are being accepted through **September 1, 2022**. Please refer to [Program Guide 1203.06](#) and the [Instructions for Preparing and Submitting a Nomination Packet](#).

○ Review Updates

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW TIMELINES (refer to applicable [FOA/RFA](#) for details):
<https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm#rrd>

Please continue to contact [RR&D](#) for guidance and to ask questions.

Spring 2023 - Center and Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP)

- NEW RFAs published – March 3, 2022
- Webinar – April 20, 2022, 12 noon: This webinar will include an overview of the funding mechanism, what RR&D is looking for and a Q&A session. Send questions in advance to Dr. Shirley Groer (Shirley.Groer@va.gov).
- Pre-application and List of Key Personnel submission deadline – September 1, 2022
- Full award e-application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – January 11, 2023
- Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (**Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024**)) **is required for all application submissions**
- Scientific Review – April 2023

- Scores and Summary Statements released – April/May 2023
- Administrative Review/Site Visits – May/June 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – Subsequent to site visit

Summer 2022 – Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist

- **NEW** Summer 2022 RFAs have been published for ALL award opportunities
- *Developing and Validating Alternatives to the Use of Canines, Felines and Non-Human Primates in VA Research (I01): RFA RX-22-032* – published February 10, 2022
 - The goal of this two-phased RFA is to develop and validate alternative methods to the use of sensitive species (e.g., non-human primates (NHP), canines and/or felines) in research. VA RR&D investigators currently funded to conduct sensitive species research are eligible to apply.
 - VA-ORD acknowledges the need for basic and translational research relevant to Veterans' conditions in appropriate models and the parallel need to reduce or eliminate the use of sensitive species.
 - The alternative methods (i.e., animal models not involving sensitive species, microphysiological systems, in vitro systems, in silico models and research involving human subjects) model should be outcome-driven, to determine successful establishment to the comparator model.
 - This RFA will support initial model development (phase one) and if successful, followed by a second phase of model validation.
 - To ensure their proposed area of research meets the intent of this FOA/RFA, investigators are strongly encouraged to consult RR&D program purview and portfolio descriptions on the RR&D website and contact the listed Scientific Program Manager (SPM) relevant to their area of study.
- *Durability of Rehabilitation Interventions for VEterans (DRIVE) Award (I01): RFA RX-22-012* – published March 30, 2022.
 - Studies of established rehabilitation interventions combined with adjunct approaches to improve overall adherence and long-term functional benefits for Veterans.
 - Examine whether a multimodal approach, including short-term clinician-directed rehabilitation interventions and long-term Veteran self-managed components, combined with adjunct approaches (such as, but not limited to, psychological support, performance feedback or whole health) significantly improves Veterans' adherence, motivation, and maintenance of physical and psychological function and quality-of-life in the long-term.
 - Investigations will determine if combining established rehabilitation interventions (e.g., evidence of effectiveness based on published outcomes or Systematic Reviews/Clinical Practice Guidelines), with appropriate adjunct approaches improves overall adherence and long-term benefits for Veterans.
 - Conceptually, this FOA/RFA envisions multi-phased investigational designs such as (but not limited to) the following:

- Phase 1a - the successful clinician-directed deployment of the established rehabilitation intervention and confirmation of expected short-term functional outcomes;
 - Phase 1b - implementation of the Veteran self-managed components and adjunct approach(es), concurrently or sequentially to Phase 1a; and
 - Phase 2 – the long-term monitoring of adherence and functional outcomes for at least 18 months following the conclusion of Phase 1a.
 - These phases describe the sequence of an individual’s participation in the study, not discrete segments of the study in which all participants are expected to transition simultaneously.
- *RR&D Translational Rehabilitation Research Award: Stage 1 (TRRA-1) (IU1)* – published April 14, 2022.
 - Funding mechanism to facilitate the translation of promising VA research discoveries in the realm of neurological, musculoskeletal and sensory systems into new treatments for Veterans to obtain functional gains.
 - TRRA-1 award provides administrative support for:
 - Preparatory planning for preliminary FDA interactions and early peer-review of the technical merit and feasibility of the approach.
 - An FDA regulatory consultant.
 - A Project Officer/Administrator (preparation and maintenance of a Masterfile, manages regulatory tasks, etc.)
 - Travel (if needed) for team members to meet.
 - Goal is to provide VA PD/PI with funding for services NOT provided through a standard Merit Award and to prepare PD/PI for TRRA-2 – Pre-clinical Good Laboratory Practice testing of the product for FDA IND/IDE submission.
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver request) submission deadline – May 2, 2022 (as May 1 falls on a Sunday)
- Full award e-application submission deadline **(no changed/corrected applications after this date)** – June 10, 2022
- Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 **(Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024)**) **is required for all application submissions**
- Scientific Review – August 8-16, 2022
- Scores released – August 18, 2022
- Summary Statements released – September 9, 2022
- Intent-to-Award notifications – late September 2022

Spring 2022 – SPiRE:

- NEW RFA published – December 17, 2021
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver request) submission deadline – February 1, 2022
- Full award e-application submission deadline **(no changed/corrected applications after this date)** – March 10, 2022

- An updated version of the Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (**Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024**)) will be **required for application submissions starting January 25, 2022**
- Scientific Review – April 20, 2022
- Scores and Summary Statements released – May 12, 2022
- Intent-to-Award notifications – Late May 2022

- **HSR&D Updates**

Naomi Tomoyasu, PhD

- Awards

Congratulations to the 2021 HSR&D Field Award recipients. Each recipient will receive \$25,000 unrestricted research funds.

Best Research Paper of the Year Award: awarded to Liam Rose, of the Palo Alto VA. Dr. Rose's paper which was published in JAMA and is entitled The Association of Expanded Health Care networks with Utilization of among Veterans Affairs enrollees—published in JAMA
Liam Rose, Palo Alto, CA

Health System Impact Award (joint recipients):

Michael Ho, Denver (Aurora), CO—for his decades long contributions as the Director of the VA Collaborative Evaluation Center (VACE) that has made a major impact on the ways we have continued to work to better understand ways to shape programs to improve care deliver for veterans.

Makoto Jones, Salt Lake City, UT for his work expansive work in the areas of antimicrobial stewardship, infection control and bio-surveillance—and most recently the impact of his innovative work in developing the COVID-19 tracking system for internal case surveillance

The Daniel Deykin Outstanding Mentor Award:

Dr. Alison Hamilton, of the Center for the Study of Health Care Innovation, Implementation and Policy at the Greater Los Angeles VA, CA

Winter 2022 Cycle

- HSR&D's merit review meetings took place virtually on February 28 - March 4, 2022.
- Scores were released on March 8, 2022.
- Summary statements were released on March 30, 2022.
- Funding decisions are expected to be made by **late April** and Notices of Intent (To-Fund or Not-To-Fund) will be sent at that time.

- A total of 28 CDAs, 16 Pilots, and 98 IIRs, for a total of 142 applications were accepted for review.

Summer 2022 Cycle

- Revised RFAs were posted on the intranet on March 25, 2022, and we had an RFA Cyber-seminar on March 31, 2022.
- The HSR&D Intent-to-Submit in ART will be open from **April 22 to May 6** (at 8:00 pm EST).
- The first day to submit full applications (using Grants.gov Workspace or eRA ASSIST) is May 15, 2022 and the last possible submission day is June 10, 2022.
- HSR&D's Scientific Merit Review Board and Career Development Award review meetings are both scheduled to take place virtually August 23 - 26, 2022.

- **BLR&D Updates**

Christopher T. Bever, Jr., MD

- Spring Review Round

The Spring round has started, and the stations are reminded that any questions should be directed to the review manager, Dr. Michael Burgio.

- BLCS LOIs

LOIs are due on May 2nd (since May 1st is a Sunday).

- New Funding Opportunity

BX-22-032 Developing and Validating Alternatives to the Use of Canines, Felines and Non-Human Primates in VA Research (I01) has been posted. Submission deadline for the Spring Round is March 10, our standard submission date.

- RFA change

BX-22-042 "BLRD Merit Review Pilot Project Awards to Validate Novel Animal or Cell-based Models of Diseases (I21)." Submissions under this RFA must be based on **published results** that support the potential and feasibility of the proposed model. Note that studies to validate alternatives to the use of sensitive species should be submitted to BX-22-032 (above).

- Clinician Scientist Award program

June 29th – Deadline for the receipt of Clinician Science Investigator (CSI) nominations for clinician scientists with competitive BLRD renewal applications submitted for Spring 2022. POC: Kimberlee.potter@va.gov Weblink with nomination instructions: <https://www.research.va.gov/services/blrd/csi.cfm>

- BLRD non-clinician eligibility clarification

Since 2006, BLRD service has required all non-clinicians to obtain eligibility through a peer-review process prior to submitting applications for merit award funding. Until 2017, that process was also required by CSRD but not by HSRD and RRD. Since 2017, CSRD service no longer required that non-clinician investigators follow the same process. Because of that change, BLRD has received applications from investigators with CSRD funding who have not gone through the eligibility process. This clarification serves to remind the VA scientific community that BLRD does require non-clinician investigators to obtain eligibility through the peer-review process and will not accept applications from non-clinician investigators with funding from other services, including CSRD, who have not obtained eligibility through the peer-reviewed eligibility process. However, BLRD would consider granting limited eligibility to those CSRD investigators who can produce a letter of eligibility with a start date after January 1, 2012, when all prior eligibilities were transitioned to the peer-review process. More details on how to submit non-clinician eligibility applications can be found by searching on-line for “BLRD/CSRD Resources for the VA Research Community.”

- Biofabrication

Biofabrication Talk: April 20, 2:30 – 3:30. Dr. Marc Ferrer from NIH/NCATS entitled "Operationalizing the Use of Biofabricated Tissue Models as Drug Testing Assay Platforms". If you are interested you can either send an email to the VHABiofabricationCoS@va.gov mailbox (cc'd) or see the flyer that will be attached to the notes from this meeting.

Biofabrication Symposium: May 4-5th – 1st VA Symposium on Biofabrication will take place virtually and is jointly sponsored by ORD and IE to engage biofabrication researchers, practitioners, visionaries, and innovators to grow VA's biofabrication efforts. POC: Kimberlee.potter@va.gov and Beth.Ripley2@va.gov Registration link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2G2LL5Z>

7. CSR&D Updates

Miriam Smyth, PhD

- Barnwell Awards

Travel this week by CSRD and ORD staff to the Birmingham Alabama VA Medical Center to present the Barnwell Award to Dr. Louis Dell'Italia. The Barnwell Award is CSRD's highest honor for clinical research contributions

The award recognizes Dr. Dell'Italia's exemplary record as a scientific leader in ground-breaking contributions to clinical management of Veterans suffering cardiovascular disease. His impact (with colleagues) on clinical practice includes:

- incorporation of changes into the American Heart Association guidelines for treatment of right ventricular myocardial infarction - the new guideline was combined therapy - inotropic drugs and judicious volume administration.

- his studies of beta-blockade for mitral regurgitation now offer a medical therapy that protects the myocardium in patients with degenerative mitral regurgitation.
- CSRD newsletter

Given the increase in travel, please be aware that the CSRD newsletter lists meeting we will be attending. The newsletter goes out to almost a thousand recipients. If you wish to be added to mailing list, please contact Lucindia Shouse.

- Submission deadline

We want to remind everyone that the next CSRD Career Development and Clinical Trials Letter of Intent deadline is Monday, May 2nd since May 1 falls on a Sunday. Stations and applicants planning to submit an LOI this round are encouraged to reach out to us as soon as possible with any questions to ensure there is time to address them.

The Spring round has started, and the stations are reminded that any questions should be directed to the review manager, Dr. Michael Burgio.

Recent LOI deadline for submissions to the new RFA for a Suicide Prevention Research Clinical Resource Center: 3 LOIs were approved. We look forward to receiving the full proposals.