VA Office of Research and Development
Field Conference Call

Monday, May 15, 2023 – 1:30 pm ET

Minutes

Welcome and Opening Comments

Grant Huang

Dr. Ramoni was on travel and Grant highlighted upcoming Research Week activities in addition to the agenda.

ORD/Research Enterprise

Grant Huang

Joining Chat on Teams

Instructions were sent to attendees prior to the meeting regarding how to access the Teams Chat for the call. This information was provided based on some individuals indicating that they could not type questions or comments on previous calls. Please refer to the email sent on May 8, 2023 with the process for joining the Teams Community to be able to access the Chat.

Recap of National Administrative Officers meeting

Highlights of the national meeting in Salt Lake City were presented. Gratitude was expressed to the organizing committee for an excellent meeting that provided information on a range of topics and facilitated networking and collaboration. Topics included centralized HR, finance, contracting, Technology Transfer (see below) and regulatory affairs. ORD intends to continue supporting training opportunities to help Administrative Officers (AOs) succeed in handling the many responsibilities they have. ACOS-Rs, investigators and others were encouraged to acknowledge the important work of AOs in the VA research enterprise.

Center Mapping Initiative

Last month, ORD announced that it was starting an effort to learn more about the extensive capabilities and resources maintained by ORD funded centers. A webinar for center directors and leaders will be held on May 16 to communicate more of the scope, intent and steps that will be involved. This webinar will be recorded for those unable to make it.

ACOS-R National Conference (Sept 17-20, 2023) Jacob Lindheimer

The ACOS-R conference will take place September 17-20th in Saint Paul, Minnesota. VA attendees should use CC101 funds to pay for travel and conference registration. Information on registration, lodging, the agenda, and other key details can be found at https://navref.org/page-18258. The agenda on the website will continue to be updated as new details on scheduling and content emerge. We recommend periodically checking it out between now and September to ensure you have the most up to date information.

ACOS breakout sessions will include programming from the thematic perspectives of ACOS Development, Program Growth, Enterprise Resources, and Strategic Planning.
There will also be general sessions, special sessions, and workshops, including a VA-only kickoff meeting, a general session on VA/NPC/AA cohesiveness, and speed networking event on the 17th, an awards dinner on the 18th, an address from Drs. Ramoni and Clancy on the 19th, and presentations on Cerner and the PACT and Cleland Dole Acts on the 20th.

The VA track sessions will conclude with a strategic planning working lunch on the 20th with the goal of translating key take home messages and action items into a solid plan for moving local programs and the broader VA research enterprise forward.

**New Deputy Chief Veterinary Medical Officer**

George Lathrop

Dr. Lathrop introduced the latest addition to the office of the CVMO. Cassandra Tansey, DVM, DACLAM. She started on 1 May as the Deputy CVMO. She is a graduate of Texas A & M College of Veterinary Medicine, did a residency at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is a Diplomate of the College of Laboratory Animal Medicine. She will assume duties as the Attending Veterinarian at our Atlanta Vivarium, perform JIT secondary reviews and interface with our field units on VMU issues.

**ORD Research Week Events**

Matthew Davio

For the first time the Research Week Kick Off Event was hosted by the Secretary of the VA. Mr. McDonough presented awards to six outstanding researchers: Dr. Rory Cooper, Pittsburgh; Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, St. Louis; Dr. Elizabeth Yano, Los Angeles; Dr. Donna Washington, Los Angeles; Dr. Nicholas Nickols, Los Angeles; and Dr. Samantha Connolly, Boston. The Undersecretary of Health Dr. Shereef Elnahal made the opening remarks. Not only was this ceremony the first of its kind, it was live-streamed, available at most VAMCs on the VA1 channel as well as available on a website, where 386 people tuned in to watch. We will be looking to replicate the ceremony next year, with a more formalized awards process (more to come on that in the early fall of this year.)

A video of the livestreamed Research Week Kick-Off can be viewed on the ORD Facebook Page: [https://www.facebook.com/varesearch/](https://www.facebook.com/varesearch/) and a recording can be found at [https://site-65402117.bcvp0rtal.com/](https://site-65402117.bcvp0rtal.com/).

More information regarding the honorees can be found at: [https://www.research.va.gov/researchweek/kickoff.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/researchweek/kickoff.cfm)

**Field Operations**

Tony Laracuente

Mr. Laracuente provided an update on the current status of the HRMACS transition.

1. HRMACs is working off the spreadsheets provided by the sites. If you did not submit one please provide soon. Round 2 email will be going out in the next few days
2. FY 22 performance bonuses. If not processed locally, will be managed by HRMACs. Please respond to email.
3. Awards. Special contribution, Time off, spot cash awards are to be submitted to Antonio.laracuente03@va.gov for processing. Be sure to include a completed 4659.
CC101 – Reminder that ORD will be requesting data soon regarding how 101 is being used. More information on this will come out in Mid-June.

**Finance**

Jason Berlow

On 5/10, ORD Finance issued a memo providing execution guidance for the remainder of FY 23/FY24. The memo provided an overview of the required Financial Management adjustments that must be made in FY 23/FY 24 and beyond. The purpose of these changes is to maximize the utilization of Research funding.

This information will be presented at the next Finance Monthly Training Series (May 17th at 3:00 PM, ED). Registration information is provided below:

Registration Link: Office of Research Protections, Policy, and Education Webinars: Registration Link

Key components of the memo include:

- All prior year funding must be obligated by 5/31 or it will be swept.
- All ARP funding must be obligated by 6/30/23 or it will be swept.
- For FY 24, the carryover target is changing from 4% to 2%.

**Tech Transfer**

Ryan Davis

A new TTP Specialist has been selected for the MVP program.

FY24 Audits of the Academic Affiliates are being scheduled.

CRADA reporting will now be done in Sophia. Several NPCs are already using this. A training demonstration will be scheduled through NAVREF. We continue to work on the data transfer of all historical records from the eCRADA registry, including pdfs agreements which were previously inaccessible from the eCRADA system.

John Kaplan presented at the Administrative Officers Conference held in Salt Lake City.

**Service Funding Opportunities, Reviews and Updates**

Sumitra Muralidhar

MVP data access is now available to all VA researchers using all existing ORD funding mechanisms, including Merit Review, Career Development, and Special RFAs. Eligibility requirements for applicants are as described in the RFAs. Details regarding data available, links to the data browser for prep to research access, and the most recent guidance shared with the field are in the presentation made by Dr. Muralidhar.
RD-23-029 mentored research supplements for early career scientists from underrepresented populations applications are **due July 6, 2023**

This will be offered as a Type 3 supplement to active VA Merits funded by BLRD, CSRD, HSRD, and RRD.

- **Budget:** $100,000/yr for up to 2 years
- **Applications will only be accepted through grants.gov/NIH Assist and reviewed via eRA commons.**

The DEI supplement RFA 23-029 is posted on the VA intranet, here: https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm

An informational webinar was held on February 15, 2023 and is posted here: https://www.research.va.gov/funding/diversity.cfm

For more information: Carol.Fowler@va.gov.

**Pain/Opioid AMP; Broad RFAs**

The Pain and Opioid Actively Managed Portfolio (POp AMP) Released two broad RFAs on April 19 and April 28 2023: 1) Parent RFA for pre-clinical, observational and epidemiological research and 2) Clinical Trial RFA for single and small multi-site clinical trials. These are cross-service RFAs with applications for rehabilitation and health services oriented applications accepted for the Summer and Winter cycles, and biomedical and clinical science applications accepted for the Fall and Spring Cycle. A pre-application is required for both RFAs. Please see the RFAs for relevant deadlines and requirements.

An informational webinar was hosted by VA HSR&D Cyber Seminars on April 18th, 2023 at 2 PM EST. The recorded session can be found at the HSR&D website at: https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/.

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RFAs can be found at: https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm

**GS14/GS15 Promotions**

The VA Centralized Positions panel reviews nominations for ORD-funded Research Positions at GS 14 and GS 15. All other ORD funded position classification requests should be submitted via Leaf to Research HR Classification Shared Services Unit, Human Resources Operations Office, Workforce Management and consulting.
The submission process for the Centralized Positions at GS 14 and 15 has been recently streamlined and First Level classification review by the VISN Central Classification Unit is no longer required.

The most up to date submission instructions, forms and information webinar recordings are found at:  https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm.

Finally, as of March, 2023, the Centralized Positions panel has become a single cross-service reviewing all promotion nominations regardless of the funding service. Review meetings will be held quarterly in Mid-June, Mid-September, Mid-December and Mid-March. Complete and correct packets must be received via IRBNet at least thirty days prior to the next scheduled meeting to be reviewed at that meeting. Please contact your service POC for any questions:

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Rehabilitation Research
Patricia Dorn

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, 2023. Please refer to Program Guide 1203.06 and the Instructions for Preparing and Submitting a Nomination Packet.

RR&D review updates:

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW TIMELINES (refer to applicable FOA/RFA for details): Please continue to contact RR&D for guidance and to ask questions.

Spring 2023 - Center and Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP):
- Administrative Review/Site Visits – Summer 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – Subsequent to site visit
Spring 2023 – SPIRE:
- Scores and Summary Statements released – May 10, 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – mid-June 2023

Spring 2023 – Total Brain Diagnostics (TBD) Proof-of-Concept (PoC) Merit Award (I01):
- Scientific Review – May 3, 2023; Administrative Review – May 11-12, 2023
- Scores and Summary Statements released – week of May 15th
- Funding Decisions - TBA

Summer 2023 – Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:
- Summer 2023 RFAs published – March 30, 2023

NEW Parent RFA RX-23-006 – See updated Special Emphasis Areas

Special Funding Opportunities:

- **RX-22-012 Durability of Rehabilitation Interventions for Veterans (DRIVE) Award (I01):**
  the goal of this RFA is to 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.

- **RX-22-020 Translational Rehabilitation Research Award: Stage 1 (TRRA-1) (IU1):**
  the goal of this RFA is 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 and to provide VA PD/PIs with funding for services NOT provided through a standard Merit Award and to prepare the PD/PI for TRRA-2 – Pre-clinical Good Laboratory Practice testing of the product for FDA IND/IDE submission. A TRRA-1 award provides administrative support for: 1) Preparatory planning for preliminary FDA interactions and early peer-review of the technical merit and feasibility of the approach. 2) An FDA regulatory consultant. 3) A Project Officer/Administrator (preparation and maintenance of a Masterfile, manages regulatory tasks, etc.). 4) Travel (if needed) for team members to meet.

- **RX-22-032 Developing and Validating Alternatives to the Use of Canines, Felines and Non-Human Primates in VA Research (I01):**
  the goal of this two-phased FOA/RFA is to provide VA investigators currently using sensitive species (e.g., non-human primates (NHP), canines and/or felines), with funding to develop and validate alternative methods.

- **NEW RX-23-007 Translational Rehabilitation Research Award: Stage 2 (TRRA-2) (IU1):**
  the goal of this RFA is to accelerate VA scientific discoveries into new treatments for neurological and musculoskeletal disorders to maximize Veterans’ functional independence, quality of life and participation in the community. This RFA supports Stage 2 of a two-stage translational award for pre-clinical testing activities towards e-filing a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Investigational New Drug (IND) or Investigational Device Exemption
TRRA-1 is the first stage of this two-stage funding mechanism (FOA/RFA RX-22-020) that enables VA investigators to prepare for preliminary FDA interactions. A funded TRRA-1 must proceed an application submission to this FOA/RFA (TRRA-2). The main objectives of TRRA-2 are to provide VA Project Directors/Principal Investigators (PD/PIs) with funding for a full pre-clinical, milestone-driven award to support the research and development efforts towards filing a FDA Investigational New Drug (IND) or Investigational Device Exemption (IDE).

- **NEW RX-23-035 Parent Merit Review Award (Pain and Opioid Actively Managed Portfolio (I01)):** This is the POo-AMP’s principal mechanism for funding preclinical, translational, behavioral, epidemiological and health services/implementation research applications where pain and opioid use and the consequences of opioid use are the primary outcome(s) of the study. The primary focus of research supported by this RFA is preclinical, translational, clinical, or health services/implementation research in the Veteran population where pain and opioid use, and the consequences of opioid use are the primary outcome(s) of the study.

- **NEW RX-23-036 Pain and Opioid Actively Managed Portfolio (POp-AMP) Clinical Trials:** This RFA supports investigator-initiated clinical trials on painful conditions and opioid use in the Veteran population. Studies supported under this RFA include interventional studies involving Human Subjects for research purposes, and methodological studies focused on research with Human Subjects. This RFA accepts applications that involve:
  - Clinical trials that include treatment regimens in any of the specific aims,
  - Pragmatic clinical trials that include an intervention,
  - Comparative-effectiveness clinical trials that compare different interventions and/or implementation of treatments and approaches.

The primary focus of research supported by POp-AMP is to support novel and innovative approaches to treat acute and chronic painful conditions, opioid safety and opioid use disorder. The primary outcome(s) for the study must focus on alleviation of pain and/or reduction of harms from opioid use.

Pre-application (LOI and waiver request) submission deadline – May 1, 2023

Full award application submission deadline is June 12, 2023 (as June 10 falls on a Saturday). No changed/corrected applications will be accepted after this date.

NOTE: 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 7-15, 2023
- Scores released – August 17, 2023
- Summary Statements released – September 8, 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – late September 2023

Biomedical Laboratory

Holly Krull

BLR&D and CSR&D is in the middle of the Spring review cycle. Research investigators are reminded not to contact Scientific Program Managers until after funding decisions are made.
2022 Middleton Awardees

In honor of Research Week across the VA, BLRD would like to honor and celebrate the 2022 William S. Middleton Award winners. The William S. Middleton Award (Middleton Award) is the highest honor awarded annually by the Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service (BLR&D) to senior VA biomedical research scientists in recognition of their outstanding scientific contributions and achievements in the areas of biomedical and bio-behavioral research relevant to the healthcare of Veterans. Middleton Award recipients have achieved international acclaim for research accomplishments in areas of prime importance to VA's research mission. The Middleton Award was established in 1960, to honor William S. Middleton, M.D., distinguished educator, physician-scientist, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Chief Medical Director from 1955 to 1963.

Amy C. Justice, M.D., Ph.D., at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, was awarded the 2022 Middleton Award in recognition of her seminal contributions to the field of Clinical Epidemiology. Dr. Justice is recognized for developing many large national cohorts based on data from the Veterans Affairs Electronic Medical Record (EHR). She is a national expert in the processes required to clean, validate, and standardize raw EHR data and in its analysis using standard statistical methods, machine learning techniques, and cross-cohort validations. She was among the first in the VA to identify the mediators of outcomes in Veterans with HIV informing intervention trials to improve their outcomes. She created an innovative framework to better understand the medical and psychiatric co-morbid behaviors and conditions, effects of aging, and drug toxicity among Veterans living with and without HIV.

Judith M. Ford, Ph.D., at the San Francisco VA Health Care System, was awarded the 2022 Middleton Award in recognition of her seminal contributions to the field of Psychiatry. Her basic science to translational research in biological psychiatry has transformed our understanding of psychotic illnesses in Veterans. Dr. Ford is credited with elucidating the basic neural mechanism that enables animals to distinguish between self and other-generated sensations. This finding provided the basis for Dr. Ford's groundbreaking translational research where she reported that people with schizophrenia “have less attenuation of cortical responses” to “self” generated sounds, which led to a series of demonstrations of similar deficits in schizoaffective and psychotic bipolar disorders. Dr. Ford, using state-of-the-art techniques, reported that this “poor” suppression may be due to the altered integrity of white matter tracks connecting speech production and reception areas. This provided fundamental insights into understanding the neurobiological basis of schizophrenia spectrum disorders. Her research career is a shining example of a visionary scientist who has created an innovative framework to elucidate the pathophysiology underlying mental disorders affecting Veterans and to reassure Veterans that their psychotic symptoms have a neurobiological basis.

Clinician Scientist Investigator Extension Award:

Clinician-scientists with a competing renewal of their BLRD Merit (RFA BX23-001) under review for the Spring 2023 cycle are invited to consider applying for a Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) Award. The CSI Award will allow for a Merit award extension of up to 2 additional years (for a total of 6 years) and up to 4 additional years (for a total of 8 years) for a Senior Clinician Scientist Investigator (SCSI) Award. Once you receive your score and percentile, please consult with your Scientific Program Manager when preparing your nomination package.
All nomination packages must be submitted to the VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov mailbox through the research office before **Wednesday, June 28th, 2023.**

Application and eligibility information for the CSI program can be found on our CSI website: [https://www.research.va.gov/services/blrd/csi.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/services/blrd/csi.cfm)

**General announcements**

- Next Field Research and Advisory Committee meeting – May 17, 2023
- If your information in the ACOS-R/AO Directory ([https://www.research.va.gov/about/national_directory.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/about/national_directory.cfm)) is missing or is incorrect, please email: ORD.Web@va.gov
- ORD Field call minutes to be posted at: [https://www.research.va.gov/resources/ORD_Admin/call_notes/default.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/resources/ORD_Admin/call_notes/default.cfm) and at ORD Field Community Teams site: [https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3a2nyfplJuZK26bJx-K98HfZGRKy5wXX3Plld1_guZ3Po1%40thread.tacv2/General?groupId=c6b5cfe2-8445-4363-8b9a-d0875b06bd19&tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3a2nyfplJuZK26bJx-K98HfZGRKy5wXX3Plld1_guZ3Po1%40thread.tacv2/General?groupId=c6b5cfe2-8445-4363-8b9a-d0875b06bd19&tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf)