



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, May 16, 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

Grant Huang, MPH, PhD

- Enterprise transformation initiative updates

The Field should be aware that ORD issued a memo on April 26, 2022 announcing that it will begin an organizational alignment into ORD functional units to better coordinate and ensure that our research has greater ability to impact Veteran care. This coordination will be among groups within ORD and other VHA clinical and operational partners. A copy of the memo can be redistributed in the notes of this call along with an updated SharePoint link with supporting materials. Likely, many have had questions and concerns and people are invited to post things on the chat where we'll collect them and compile them into an FAQ document for all to see.

What this means is that there will be a replacement the current Service-based structure with a new structure. This alignment will shift away from the Services based structure for priority setting, solicitations for funding, and funding decisions to actively managed portfolios that are more cross-cutting in nature and have a more comprehensive view of the research in a given area. It has been about 20 years since the last ORD reorganization and much has changed regarding VA, the functions and responsibilities of ORD and how research is done.

Another key goal was to be able to better service R&D offices and their work. As many people have experienced, challenges in conducting VA research have resulted because research is seen as a separate part of the agency with its own set of operational and other requirements. It is not well connected to groups at an enterprise level and it impacts our ability to do our research. To date, you have already heard some movement in this area, much of it lead by Tony Laracuenta. Often, ACOS-Rs and AOs do not get the recognition nor support that they deserve for the wide-range of duties they have. We

hope that the alignment will allow their leadership role to be more valued and supported not only by ORD but by facilities, VISNs and VHA. The ORD organizational alignment will also help with formalizing efforts for Field support.

This alignment effort will occur in phases with the first phase beginning in July as part of a transitional period over the next one to two years. During this transition, commitments to currently funded ORD research and activities will not change. ORD staffing levels will not decrease. The scientific submission and review process ORD uses to identify the best science for advancing our mission to Veterans will remain the same until the Service transition is complete.

During this initial phase, there will be more info gathering and the primary focus will be within ORD/Central Office and its units to enable a foundation that will further help operational and other activities involving the field. The phased approach is intended not to simply put something out there that people have to adapt to but to allow a designed structure that goes through an implementation process.

ORD plans to provide regular communications on efforts and engage whenever possible to obtain input and address questions. One opportunity is a webinar in June that will allow more detail and more interaction to occur. This Wednesday, May 18, we will be discussing questions with your Field Research Advisory Committee representatives.

Research Enterprise SharePoint resource link is:

<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.

- **Research Week**

Ubon A. Mendie
Sandra Glover

National VA Research Week theme is “Science in Service to Veterans” highlighting scientific discovery and innovation that focuses on improving Veteran’s lives.

Research Week Communications Toolkit for the field is available. Also, a set of 5 research videos with compelling stories of the phenomenal research at VA available on the VA YouTube Channel:

Youtube Playlist:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyyv3Z1g24x8kmTEtT8MV-I7

VA Research Week 2022 – YouTube Video Titles:

- ***Fighting for Vets; Life & Limb***
 - Preventing Veteran limb loss • featuring Dr. Luke Brewster and Dr. Olamide Alabi - VA Atlanta Healthcare System, Atlanta, Georgia
- ***Heartwarming Innovation***
 - Warm profusion device for organ transplants • Dr. Michael Crittenden VA St. Louis Healthcare System, St. Louis, Missouri
- ***The Code to Catch Cancer***
 - Electronic health records research: cancer follow-up • Dr. Hardeep Singh - Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Houston, Texas
- ***Project Life Force***
 - Suicide prevention • Dr. Marianne Goodman James J. Peters VA Medical Center, Bronx, New York
- ***Brain Games***
 - Visual and related neurological problems in traumatic brain injury • Dr. Mark Walker - Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, Cleveland, Ohio

The Research Week capstone event is Friday 2 p.m. EST - the virtual Research Week Symposium which recognizes the work of 4 senior VA researchers who have won top honors for their work.

Symposium speakers:

- Dr. Louis Dell'Italia, Barnwell Awardee / Foundational research in cardiac diseases like heart attacks
- Dr. Donna Washington, USH Awardee / Health equity research, minorities, women
- Dr. Robert Bonomo, Middleton Awardee / Antibiotic resistance, lead on VA's response to COVID-19 research
- Dr. Leigh Hochberg, Magnuson Awardee / Neurorestoration, BrainGate, Director of Clinical Trials

3. Research Protections & Policy

- **Demo Research Law Explorer**

Don E. Workman, Ph.D.

Those involved in regulatory review or oversight of human subjects or animal research know that there are times when we need to consult state and local laws to ensure we are in compliance. In the absence of any other repository of these laws at the federal level, Molly's Klote spearheaded ORD initiating a contract to develop an aggregation of State Laws related to relevant regulatory topics like informed consent, age of majority. There

will be formal announcements about the Research Law Explorer and a webinar this Thursday May 19th at 2:30pm Eastern time to show its workings, now a brief demo by Mike Wiley to those of you attending.

Launch of the Proactive Calling (“cold call”) SharePoint application portal

VHA Directive 1200.05, Paragraph 5.g(8), restricts cold calling for purposes of study recruitment in a VA study. Cold calling or “proactive calling” is defined by ORD as using a telephone call as the initial recruitment contact with a potential VA subject in the absence of prior contact by letter or in person unless there is written documentation from the potential VA subject that he or she is willing to be contacted by telephone for potential recruitment into VA studies.

In August of 2021, ORD conducted a webinar regarding proactive calling. In that webinar, ORD conveyed that the acting Under Secretary of Health (USH) signed a policy memorandum (dated June 29, 2021) allowing for the proactive calling of VA subjects for recruitment. However, proactive calling for VA studies could only be done using ORD-established criteria with an ORD-managed approval process. In the webinar, ORD described the proactive calling criteria and the application process using VA email. ORD also stated that a dedicated SharePoint site would be set up for submission of applications to replace the use of VA email applications for proactive calling requests.

The dedicated ORD Proactive Application SharePoint site has now been set up with slight modifications of the criteria and a more user-friendly and streamlined application form. The location of the ORD Proactive SharePoint site is being placed on the ORD Policies and Guidance webpage and will be included in the notes of this call.

Link: [Proactive Calling for Subject Recruitment - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

- **VAIRRS Conflict of Interest Module**

Angela Foster

The VAIRRS Program, in collaboration with OGC, is moving forward to provide a secure module within IRBNet to support the submission and review of the OGE 450 Alt VA. The Conflict of Interest (COI) module is planned for deployment later this summer. There will be more information to share as we progress with pre-deployment activities. In the interim, we need the field’s help to identify the local COI Administrators. A data call is forthcoming requesting the name and email address of the COI Administrator supporting your site. Please respond to the data call at your earliest convenience. The information will help us plan for provisioning access, training, and targeting future communications.

4. ORD Field Update

- **Field Enterprise Research Support Services contract**

Tony Laracuenta

The initiative is going well. To date, ORD has supported 3 administrative support requests and 2 research support requests. Currently, there have been 5 additional ones in queue and 4 or 5 in the early stages. Of the ones supported, the contractors are effectively supported the programs. A quick reminder that the information is available at the FERSS initiative Sharepoint [Field Enterprise Research Support Services \(FERSS\) - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#). As always, please refer any questions to Tony Laracuente regarding this or the HR Centralization initiative.

- **ORD Research Supplements to promote Diversity and Collaborations** Carol Fowler, Ph.D.

ORD DEI Working group released two RFAs for ORD-wide Research Supplements on April 27, 2022:

- RD-22-029 - [Research Supplements to Promote Diversity \(I01, Type 3\)](#) – mentored research supplements for early career scientists from underrepresented populations.
- RD-22-030 - [Research Supplements to Promote Collaborations to Enhance Diversity in VA Research \(I01, Type 3\)](#) – intended to support collaborations between VA Investigators and investigators at non-VA institutions, including, but not limited to Minority Serving Institutions.

These will be offered as Type 3 supplements to active VA Merits funded by BLRD, CSRD, HSRD, and RRD. Due dates and budgets for both supplements:

- **Budget:** \$100,000/yr for up to 2 years
- **Due:** August 1, 2022.
- **Earliest Start date:** October 1, 2022
- **Applications will only be accepted through grants.gov/NIH Assist and reviewed via eRA commons.**

An informational webinar and Q&A on this supplement opportunity was given on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. The webinar recording, webinar slides and a link to the RFA is posted at: <https://www.research.va.gov/funding/diversity.cfm>

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

ORD DEI also has 2 additional short funding announcements:

- Support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Veterans Affairs Field Research Employees. This opportunity is open to all VA employees who are currently affiliated with an ORD program/service including Research Services, Programs, Centers and VA investigators with current ORD-funded projects to request funds for education that will promote and support diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workforce.
 - **Budget: \$ 5,000**
 - **Due: June 30, 2022**

- **Applications must be submitted to the mailbox VHACOORDDEIWG@va.gov with the subject line “DEI Training” by June 30, 2022. Please include applicant and station name in the subject line.**
- Leadership Development for VA employees affiliated with an ORD Program/Service. ORD is seeking to promote professional development opportunities and grow future leaders that reflect the diversity of the Veterans VA serves.
 - **Budget: \$10,000**
 - **Due: June 30, 2022**
 - **Applications must be submitted to the mailbox VHACOORDDEIWG@va.gov with the subject line “Professional Development Training” by June 30, 2022. Please include applicant and station name in the subject line.**

For more information: lina.kubi@va.gov

5. Services updates and announcements

- **RR&D Updates**

Karen Lohmann Siegel

- Delivering discoveries to Veterans:

DAV identified addressing the prosthetic needs of women Veterans with amputation as a research priority several years ago and Congress has explicitly noted this priority in the ORD research appropriation. The RR&D community has responded to meet these needs, and one RR&D funded project has resulted in a 3D-printed foot recently unveiled by industry partner UNYQ at OTWorld 2022.

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20220510005547/en/UNYQ-Debuts-New-3D-Printed-UNYQ-Foot-at-OTWorld-2022>

The new UNYQ FOOT is the result of a development collaboration with the Minneapolis Adaptive Design & Engineering (MADE) Program at Minneapolis VA Health Care System with funding from RR&D to develop the foot and the TTP BRAVE program to bridge the product to market. The PI on the study was Andrew Hansen and the project lead engineer was Eric Nickel.



This foot is based on research conducted with US Veterans with leg amputations desiring a need for prosthetic feet that allow a larger selection of shoe types, sizes, and improved aesthetics, especially among women. MADE designed an energy-storing prosthetic ankle unit that connects to 3D-printed prosthetic feet that accommodate different shoes, heel heights and improved cosmetic features. The UNYQ FOOT will be available later this year in a wide variety of colors and styles, and as the product is custom, no inventory management is needed, reducing waste and cost.

- [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 [FOARFA](#) for details):
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 included an overview of the funding mechanism, what RR&D is looking for and a Q&A session. Contact Dr. Shirley Groer (Shirley.Groer@va.gov) for a link to the recording.
- 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
- *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

- Virtual Care Strategic Planning Meeting

HSRD is sponsoring strategic planning meeting for research in Virtual Care May 18-19 with the Office of Connected Care in New Orleans. HSRD hopes to identify research priorities that will become the basis of HSRD priorities document or of solicitations for pilot projects from the Virtual Care CORE.

SMRB Update

Winter 2022 Cycle

- Funding was approved for the following applications: 23 IIRs/SDRs, 1 Pilot, and 7 CDAs.
- JIT opened for the Winter 2022 awarded projects on May 4, 2022.

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.
- Please review the RFAs thoroughly to check for any changes in requirements and to ensure compliance. The major updates to the RFAs include:
 - Pandemic-Related Disrupted and Deferred Care RFA (HX-22-025) is only open to applicants who applied but were not selected for funding from the Summer HX-21-025 or the Winter HX-22-025 RFA
 - Updated HSRD Priorities Document (dated March 30, 2022)
 - Updated HSR&D Gaps in Research (Parent & Pilot RFAs)
 - Updated SF424 VA Application Guide (Posted 4/5/2022)
 - Engagement of Veterans in the Design and Implementation of Research
 - Director Letters: Letter must include language supporting protected time for clinician researchers
 - Updated guidance for Letters of Support
- The HSR&D Intent-to-Submit in ART closed on May 6, 2022; and we received 145 ITS for the Summer cycle.
- 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.

For questions regarding the review process, please contact Scientific Merit Review Program staff at vhacoscirev@va.gov

- **CSR&D and BLR&D Updates**

Miriam Smyth, PhD

Miriam Smyth represented both BLRD and CSR&D. Both services are currently engaged in merit review meetings and will continue conducting these meetings for the next three weeks. We request that investigators not contact their portfolio managers about applications that are currently under review until after the margin meetings in mid-July.