Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Huang welcomed participants, highlighting the agenda and reminding people to join the ORD Field Community if they wished to comment or ask questions directly in the Chat.

ORD / Research Enterprise

- ACOS-R Annual Meeting – travel

A guidance document on some travel processes and funding will be forthcoming for ACOS-Rs planning to attend the annual meeting in St. Paul, MN from Sept 17-20. Appreciation was expressed to those ACOS-Rs on the conference planning committee.

- VA PACT Act update

Recently, VA held a PACT Act strategic meeting that involved VHA, VBA, NCA and the Secretary’s office. Drs. Huang and Block attended on behalf of ORD. Given the wide impact of what will be involved, participants were encouraged to be familiar with activities related to it as ORD expects there will be a range of work/research that could be applicable. Areas discussed at the meeting that have relevance to the VA research enterprise include data (especially for presumptives), care delivery, and communications. Information will be shared with the field when available.

- ISRM Update

Dr. Bever discussed the progress on the reorganization structure and the underlying mechanisms including the functional matrix and the integrated project teams. Slides were presented summarizing key points and will be included as part of these minutes.

- IT and Data Governance Update

A high-level summary of recent efforts focused on improving field capabilities to leverage IT and data assets effectively was provided. The presentation also provided a preview of the current priorities of the initiative team to include the development of a new strategy and governance structure to coordinate future improvement efforts.

Field Operations updates

- HRMACS and classifications update

An update and some key data/statistics were presented to help the field understand what is happening. The field was reminded that the shifts toward centralized HR processes is still in
early phases and key teams are working through some backlogs from the transition as some actions/communications did not take place as expected. Figures/data to date include:

- Active Recruitments Transitioned from Local VISN HR: 241+ (number keeps growing)
- Non-Competitive Requests Received: 414
- Job Announcement Requests Received: 180
- Non-Comp Qualifications Reviewed/Approved: 222 Reviewed / 161 Approved
- Tentative Job Offers Issued: 196 Total / 96 Active pending Pre-Employment
- Firm Job Offers Issued: 129 Total / 28 Active pending EOD
- Employees Onboarded: 101

Phase 1 is almost complete (prior to May 16, 2023)
Phase 2 will be starting in the next week or so

VISN HR Total FY22 Recruitments: 1,360
HRMACS Feb-June 2023 Total Recruitments: 835

With regard to classifications, some performance data presented include:

- Total Number of Actions done to date 225
- Centralized PDs have been established for: Data Scientist, Statistician, Data Manager, Committee Manager, Clinical Studies Coordinator, Biological lab Tech (animal and bench)

The team is working on: Budget Analyst, Budget Tech (with procurement duties), Secretary and Research Assistant.
Incumbents must compete for new positions or once a position is classified, convert to a new appointment.

- CC101 Data Call

The data call focuses on how research offices are using and planning to use the CC101 funds. There have been 33 out 104 responses to date. In FY 23, ORD changed the CC101 formula to be more consistent with the office needs. The expenditure report will help ORD to assess the implementation and to determine if any CC101 funds need to be returned in FY 23. Returning funds in no way impacts the projected fy 24 allocation. Returned funds will be used to support projects and other high priority initiatives in FY 23 and help reduce the carryover amounts in the field. However, failure to complete may negatively impact your FY23 and FY 24 amounts.

- Mandate to shift to electronic funds transfer

The U.S. Treasury Bureau of the Fiscal Service is proposing to amend its 31 CFR Part 208 that implements a statutory mandate requiring the Federal Government to deliver non-tax payments by electronic funds transfer (EFT). Movement to Direct Deposit (EFT) or Direct Express should have already been happening over the past few years. The biggest challenge are large survey studies and homeless population studies. VA ORD is looking into alternatives. More information to come in the next few months however the ask is to work with your fiscal and start transitioning. Several sites have nicely developed SOPs.

- ePerformance and Awards
Award requests are not to be uploaded to the ELR Leaf Portal. The 4659 should be completed and emailed to Antonio.Laracuente@va.gov for processing.

To complete the form:
1. Download the latest version (2023) from [VA FORM 4659, INCENTIVE AWARDS RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL](#).
2. Fill out the appropriate sections completely including the justification (use the guide to assist you).
3. Make sure that a recommending official AND a concurring official sign the form before submitting it.
4. Email completed forms to Antonio.Laracuente@va.gov.

Common issues:
1. Justification does not meet the requirements in 5017
2. Not signed by concurring official (usually ACOS or AO)
3. Wrong form (do not use the 2019 form).
4. Amounts are not within the acceptable parameters in 5017.

Finance  
Jason Berlow
- Q3 RAFT Execution Report will be due on July 17
- The field was reminded to about key financial requirements for financial operations for the end of FY23

Regulatory and Policies  
Erica Aulik
- **ORD FIND Pro Tool: FIND Pro Empowers Researchers**

  This new tool to help the field is now live. An overview was presented and capabilities include:
  - Returns relevant and rank ordered search results regarding VA research policy, guidance, and FAQs.
  - Provides a portal to ask ORD policy experts questions. As questions are typed, key word searches are being made in the background, and results are presented before the question is even submitted.
  - Offers a mechanism for the researcher to provide feedback that is read and discussed by the FIND Pro team, and escalated to ORD leadership as needed.

Types of Policy-Related Documents Included In the Tool:
- All VA and VHA Directives
- All VA and VHA Handbooks
- ORD Program Guides—1200 Series
- ORD Guidance
- ORD FAQs

Links
- [Find Pro](#)
- [Recorded Launch Webinar](#)
- [User Guide](#) (8 pages)
New Field Staff have been selected for Indianapolis and for the Million Veteran Program.

FY24 BRAVE Program
- RFA Release/Posted Date: June 1, 2023
- LOI Submission Deadline: June 21, 2023
- Invitation to Apply: July 12, 2023
- Application Deadline: August 7, 2023, 11:59pm local time
- Review Process: August 10 – August 30, 2023
- Award Decision Letter Date: September 5, 2023
- Start Dates: October 1, 2023, or contingent upon release of funds by VA Finance

Service Funding Opportunities, Reviews and Updates

ORD Cross Service Announcements
ORD Mentored Supplements for Diversity Due Date
- RD-23-029 — mentored research supplements for early career scientists from underrepresented populations. Applications 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 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.

SPECIAL ISSUE - Improving Care for Veterans Through Health Equity Research

The VA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is pleased to announce a special collection in Health Equity focused on VA Health Equity research and DEI efforts. The project was the brainchild of the late Mitch Mirkin from ORD Comms. There is a special tribute to Mitch included in the special collection. Highlights of the collection include an introduction from Drs. Carolyn Clancy and Rachel Ramoni, research articles on health equity research from accomplished VA researchers and articles from ORD staff on increasing representation of diverse Veterans in MVP and in clinical trials.

The special collection was released in print on June 25, 2023, and is also freely available online here: https://home.liebertpub.com/spcoll/improving-care-for-veterans-through-health-equity-research/1159/
Welcome to Erin Spaniol, MS, OTR/L, MPH, - RR&D New Deputy Director

Erin Spaniol began her career at the Department of Veterans Affairs as an occupational therapist and is thrilled to return to the agency. She joins the VA from the National Institutes of Health, where she was most recently Director of Policy and Evaluation at the NIH’s Helping to End Addiction Long-term (HEAL) Initiative. In that role, she provided oversight and advice on interagency efforts in pain and opioid research and policy. Prior to her role at HEAL, she worked at the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Science, where she guided pain management research centered on nonpharmacologic strategies.

Before her time at the NIH, Erin spent over a decade as an occupational therapist specializing in polytrauma rehabilitation and assistive technology. Her past work at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center focused on helping veterans recover from traumatic brain injury and limb loss. There, she co-directed the Wounded Warrior Seating and Mobility Clinic and developed custom seating systems for adaptive sports equipment and vehicles. Additionally, she helped establish an Assistive Technology Center at the University of Pennsylvania Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine.

Erin enjoys gardening, riding horses, and spending time with her husband and young son.

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 – June 5, 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 (IDE). 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 POP-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 (no changed/corrected applications after this date) – June 12, 2023 (as June 10 falls on a Saturday)
- Scientific Review – August 7-15, 2023
- Scores released – August 17, 2023
- Summary Statements released – September 8, 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – late September 2023

**Fall 2023 – SPIRE:**

- Updated SPIRE RFA published – June 15, 2023
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver request) submission deadline – August 1, 2023
- Full award application submission deadline (no changed/corrected applications after this date) – September 12, 2023
- Scientific Review – October 24, 2023
- Scores and Summary Statements released – November 15, 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – early December 2023

All submissions require Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024)) or later version is required.

**Health Services R&D**


**General announcements**

- Next Field Research and Advisory Committee meeting – July 19, 2023
- Next ORD Field Call – July 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

and at the ORD Field Community Teams site:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3a2nyfpIJuZK26bJx-K98HfZGRKy5wXX3Plld1_guZ3Po1%40thread.tacv2/General?groupId=c6b5cfe2-8445-4363-8b9a-d0875b06bd19&tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf