Welcome and Opening Comments

The ORD Field Community was welcomed and given highlights of the agenda. Recognition was given to those who helped organize and attended the ACOS-R Annual meeting the previous week.

Research Enterprise / Enterprise Optimization

- Brief recap of ACOS-R Annual Meeting

BLUF: A summary of ACOS-R Annual meeting, materials and next steps were provided.

The national ACOS-R annual meeting in St. Paul, MN was held from Sept. 17-20, 2023 and thanks to Jacob Lindheimer and Gerhard Schulteis, co-chairs and all members of the planning committee for a successful meeting. A document was previously shared that overviewed the sessions and listed the planning committee members. Additionally, slides are posted on the ORD Field Community Sharepoint site (2023 NAVREF & ACOS-R Joint Conference Slide Decks). In the upcoming weeks, ORD will be drafting an executive summary of the meeting. The intent is that all, including those who could not attend, will be able to review these resources that ORD plans to keep available for all ACOS-Rs. ORD will also be finding ways to organize materials from past meetings as part of our reference library as well.

Sessions focused on the role of the ACOS-R and ways to help with local strategic planning. There were many interactive sessions. Among take-home messages was the need for supporting ACOS-Rs with information and talking points on the various topics coming from ORD to help with communicating things to local groups including investigators and medical center leadership. Additionally, there will be several organizational activities that Enterprise Optimization / Field Operations will take up to try providing ways to support ACOS-Rs and AOs in their jobs.

Those who attended were asked to provide feedback. ORD is discussing future meetings, including an expected meeting again with annual NAVREF meeting in Washington, DC in 2024.

- Million Veteran Program data

BLUF: A new MVP application/data use request was presented.

To better facilitate MVP data use for VA researchers and improve downstream project management, a new pre-application MVP Data Use Request has been incorporated into the revised guidance document for VA projects using MVP data. The updated guidance document contains specific policies and procedures for the data use request process, available data types, eligibility requirements, and contact information and is available in the ORD Teams site.
The new MVP Data Use Request process will be required for VA applications with MVP aims starting in the Winter 23/24 and Spring 24 Merit Review Cycles

- Field Operations
  
  Tony Laracuente

BLUF: Updates on FERRS and FMLA were provided. Requests for action related to performance appraisals and feedback to the AO council were made.

Tony expressed thanks to all of the ACOS-Rs who approached last week with concerns, thoughts and ideas. The candor and the insights were truly appreciated. Open dialogue is key to moving forward.

Tony wanted to remind everyone that the FERRS initiative is not going away. Please continue to use this in FY 24 for short term needs such as administrative support for Committee management, Investigator support in starting or closing projects and data analysis. Beginning in FY24, funding will need to be provided from CC101 if the effort is supporting the office due to shortages or the from the project itself in the case of investigator support. Questions can be directed to Tony or Shawn Berrien.

ORD received an influx of questions about FMLA. The September 21 HRMACS ORD Monthly Management Support Liaison call talked about FMLA and how employees should request FMLA through HRMACs. Please encourage your employees to plan ahead and share the short video provided during the training.

Performance appraisals are coming due. This is the first time that you will be working with HRMACs on processing these, so please take the trainings and try to meet the deadlines. Thank you to do those who completed the survey regarding eperformance, hybrid or paper. This will help us plan out the next few months. Expect more information regarding processing appraisals and awards.

Thanks were expressed to all of the AOs who are providing feedback on issues. Tony specifically acknowledged Randy Gieben, Administrative Officer at the Palo Alto HSRD Center for Innovation to Implementation and to Mercedes Vera, Administrative Officer at the Boston CSP Coordinating Center for their help with HRMACS as we move forward. Their advice and assistance in various areas and with questions has been invaluable. He also thanked Kari Points for all her work with all things financial, specifically with RMS.

Tony encouraged AOs to reach out the AO council members with concerns, issues, problems, ideas, and suggestions. They provide a lot of inputs and insight to both Grant and Tony. Current members are: Sedra Graves, Holly Henry, Maggie Covar, Lizzy Koester, Gregory Goodale, and Coral Ana.

Finance

Matt Verna and Jason Berlow

Prior Year 0161A1 23-24 funding

As previously communicated, ORD Finance will pull back prior-year funding by program that is above 2% of your stations FY 23 program allocation as of 10/1/23.

The funds will be pulled close to 10/23/23 after the last pay period accrual hits.
Do not use Prior year for purchase card orders, 1358s, 2237s, or expenditure transfers (until further notice).

**Current Year (0161 A1 24-25)**

Use current year funding for all required Purchase Card, IPAs, etc.

Planned travel should utilize current year funding and not extend beyond the CR date (11/17/23). The travel restrictions detailed for a government shutdown do not apply under a CR.

The IFCAP overcommit switch has been made available all stations for FY24 execution requirements until funding is TDA’d in AACS. Please contact us if you have any issues using FY 24 FCPs.

You will receive project funds on station pro-rated for the FY24 amount of your ITA.

DO be mindful that the funds on station in your initial TDAs are for the 47 days of the CR. You will not have enough funds to obligate beyond the initial 47 days.

Utilize RAFT for your FY24 allocations/pink sheets. See previous training: [Nov 9 2022 Finding Reviewing and Executing your Budget Allocations 11.9.22).pptx](#)

**Enterprise Protections Regulatory Outreach & Systems**

- Technology Transfer
  
  John Kaplan

Ten licenses have been issued for FY23. There are many more in the pipeline.

We have completed 8 affiliate audits and 9 are scheduled in FY24.

Dr. Bodnar has been hired as the Field Technology Transfer Specialist (TTS) at the Pittsburgh VA. A TTS has been selected for Ann Arbor VA. This person will serve both the Ann Arbor VA and the Detroit VA. The start date is pending. A TTS has been selected for Nashville VA. The start date is pending.

Technology Transfer TMS On-line Course completion stats will be sent to each ACOS/AO.

Finalizing award for new patent contract – award expected by October 2023.

28 out of 74 BRAVE applications were selected for funding in FY24.

**Investigators, Scientific Review & Management**

- Investigators Scientific Review and Management updates (ISRM) Chris Bever

Dr. Bever presented an overview of the new organizational structure, the new application review process and tabletop Modeling Sessions as well expectations during the ISRM reorganization up to and through launch. The powerpoint is included in the ORD Teams site.
ISRM Field-based meeting funding opportunity

Holly Krull

Field Based Planning Meetings to Foster Collaborative Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Site Studies to Improve Veteran Health

BLUF: Instructions for applying for Field Based Planning Meetings was provided.

The request must come from a VA investigator who is currently funded as a PI by an ORD Service (i.e., Biomedical Laboratory, Clinical Science, Health Services, or Rehabilitation Research and Development) in the subject matter area of the proposed meeting.

The meetings must be focused on planning collaborative research involving VA investigators which will lead to solutions to the health issues of Veterans.

The planning meetings must address an area of high importance for the health of Veterans with a clear translational pathway and should focus on health issues that are Veteran priority areas (traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, military-related exposures, suicide prevention, pain and addiction, war-related illness or injury, or as indicated by being the focus area of a Congressionally mandated legislative requirement or center (GRECC, MIRECC, etc.) or of a center funded by one of the ORD services (HSRD COIN, RRD Center, etc.).

Applications are due September 29, 2023.

BLRD

Holly Krull

Suspension of Non-Clinician Eligibility Program

BLUF: The Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development (BLRD) Service is temporarily suspending the non-clinician eligibility program starting with the Spring (March) 2024 submission deadline.

Non-clinician investigators who do not currently have BLRD eligibility and are interested in submitting an application to BLRD will be required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) prior to review through the pre-application (I02) process in eRA. An LOI approval memo must be included in a submitted application from a non-clinician investigator.

For spring 2024, LOIs via the pre-application process will be due November 1, 2023. The LOI/pre-application RFA will be posted on RFAs and Program Announcements (va.gov) Detailed information on the LOI/pre-application process will follow.

Requirements for submission:

All PD/PIs must have a VA-paid appointment of at least 25 hours per week (5/8ths) to receive ORD research funding (VHA Program Guide 1200.15).

If a clinician or a non-clinician PD/PI does not have a current, 5/8ths VA-paid appointment, the Letter of Support from the Medical Center Director must indicate citizenship status/eligibility for VA employment and include a commitment to offer the PD/PI a 5/8ths (or greater) appointment at the VAMC, if the application is approved for funding.
We are strongly encouraging the identification of dedicated research space available to the PD/PIs when submitting applications, as the awarded VA research must be conducted, principally (with the exception of core facilities), in a VA facility or VA-leased space. Offsite waivers are only granted in extraordinary circumstances.

Equipment purchased with award funds must be located in VA space or VA-leased space.

**Data Science RFA: BX-23-008**

BLUF: The Data Science Merit Review RFA will be suspended.

Those PIs who have an approved LOI for this RFA should apply in the future to the parent RFA BX-24-001 and include that LOI approval as an appendix to the application. New applications that would have responded to the Data Science Merit Award RFA should submit using the new non-clinician pre-application LOI mechanism to the parent RFA.

**ShEEP/LAM**

In anticipation of a budget shortfall, BLR&D will not be releasing an RFA for ShEEP for FY24. We will also be unable to accept requests for LAM. However, if there are shared equipment supporting mission-critical function but are broken or failing, please contact Alex.chiu@va.gov or Sara.clark@va.gov.

**2024 William S. Middleton Award** nominations are due February 1, 2024.

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. [William S. Middleton Award (va.gov)]

- Pain and Opioid Use AMP  
  Carol Fowler

BLUF: The Pain/Opioid Use Disorder Actively Managed Portfolio (POU-AMP) announces a funding opportunity for (BX/CX/HX/RX-24-037) Pharmacogenomics/Biomarker Studies to Guide Clinical Care in Pain and OUD, which was released on September 22, 2023 and can be found at [https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm](https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm).

**This FOA/RFA accepts applications that involve:**

Use of machine learning and artificial intelligence algorithms to extract and code data from electronic health records and other sources to define specific clinical, genetic, and behavioral factors for use in predictive models to inform progression to or treatment for high impact chronic pain (HICP).
Studies identifying behavioral, clinical, genetic, and epigenetic risk factors that can be used in predictive models to identify: 1) individuals with HICP; 2) individuals at risk of progressing to HICP; 3) individuals at risk of developing OUD as a result of prescribed opioids.

Studies identifying behavioral, clinical, genetic, and epigenetic biomarkers that may predict responsiveness to specific pharmacologic or nonpharmacologic treatments for chronic painful conditions.

Prospective studies validating behavioral, clinical, genetic or epigenetic biomarkers and models incorporating multiple variables to predict treatment approaches for individuals with HICP.

Note: Submitting investigators must adhere to all eligibility and preapplication requirements and submission deadlines detailed in the Pain/Opioid Use RFAs, found at: https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm

**Webinar:** There will be a webinar on Pain/Opioid Use AMP RFAs on Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Eastern Time.

 *Link to register if anyone is interested:* https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/weblink/register/r1a221e63566ce266e0a48ad38f3bb099

**Scientific/Research Contacts for More Information:**
Dr. Carol Fowler, BLR&D, Carol.Fowler@va.gov
Dr. Jayanthi Sankar, CSR&D, Jayanthi.Sankar@va.gov
Dr. Cathie Plouzek, HSR&D, Cathie.Plouzek@va.gov
Dr. Audrey Kusiak, RR&D, Audrey.Kusiak@va.gov

- Merit Review Pilot Project Awards BX23-042 to Validate Novel Animal or Cell-based Models of Diseases (I21) Arun Sharma

*BLUF:* VA investigators with expertise in developing alternatives to the use of animals in research should consider submitting applications in response to the RFA BX-23-042.

ORD has developed RFAs to validate alternative approaches to reduce the use of animals in VA research, and to validate new models for clinical conditions lacking appropriate model systems. In Spring 2020, a broad Validation RFA was split into three separate Pilot funding mechanisms including the BX-xx-042 to support research to “Validate Novel Animal or Cell-based Models of Diseases”. The RFA accepts applications to validate approaches like tissue culture, organoids, and other strategies that will reduce the use animals, including Sensitive Species, in VA research. As of now 10 proposals received in response to these RFAs have been selected for funding.

An approved Letter of Intent (LOI) is required to submit applications in response to this RFA and the next LOI submission deadline is November 1, 2023. The information about the RFA and LOI can be found on the VA intranet RFA page (https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm). For additional inquiries about this RFA please contact Arun Sharma at arun.sharma@va.gov.

- RRD
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 and Fall 2023
• Intent-to-Award notifications – Subsequent to site visit

Summer 2023 – Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:
• Intent-to-Award notifications – September 20, 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
  o Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024)) or later version is required.
• Scientific Review – October 24, 2023
• Scores and Summary Statements released – November 15, 2023
• Intent-to-Award notifications – early December 2023

Winter 2024 – Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:
• Winter 2024 RFAs published – September 22, 2023
  o UPDATED RR&D Pre-application (IO2) RFA RX-22-101
  o NEW RR&D Parent RFA RX-24-002 – See updated Special Emphasis Areas
  o 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.

- **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 ORD-WIDE FOA/RFA - RX-24-030** *Mentored Physician & Clinical Psychologist Award in Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias (MPCPS-ADRD) [IK2]*: The purpose of this FOA/RFA is to attract, develop and retain talented VA physician-scientists and clinical psychologist-scientists who are early in their scientific careers and investigating Alzheimer’s disease and/or Alzheimer’s disease-related dementias (AD/ADRD). This research can focus on any aspect of the field (e.g., disease mechanisms, biomarker discovery, prevention, diagnosis, clinical assessment and care, therapeutics and symptom management, caregiving). The RFA also promotes developing and implementing a collaborative framework to facilitate co-funding and support of shared research priorities between NIA and VA. It will provide an opportunity to develop a sustainable process for collaboration and increased coordination between the two organizations.

- **NEW ORD-WIDE FOA/RFA - RX-24-035** *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 ORD-WIDE FOA/RFA - RX-24-036** *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 requests) submission deadline – November 1, 2023
- Full award application submission deadline (no changed/corrected applications after this date) – December 12, 2023
  NOTE: Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024)) or later version is required for all application submissions
- Scientific Review – February 20-27, 2024
- Scores released – February 29, 2024
- Summary Statements released – March 21, 2024
- Intent-to-Award notifications – Mid-April 2024

General announcements

- Next ORD Field Call – October 16, 2023
- If your information in the ACOS-R/AO Directory (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 ORD Field Community Teams site: https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3a2nyfplJuZK26bJxK98HfZGRKcy5wXX3Pld1_guZ3Po1%40thread.tacv2/General?groupId=c6b5cfe2-8445-4363-8b9a-d0875b06bd19&tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf