



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Research & Development

## Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, October 17, 2022 – 1:30 pm ET

Internal Teams Site – Click here: [ORD Field Community](#)

### 1. Welcome

Grant Huang, MPH, PhD

Grant Huang welcomed attendees and highlighted the agenda while expressing appreciation for efforts recently in closing out the last fiscal year and continued desire dialog and to share information with each other.

### 2. ORD / Research Enterprise

Grant Huang, MPH, PhD

- **Hot Topics – PACT Act, MAMMO Act, High Consequence Infections**

ORD wanted to ensure that the Field is aware of current areas that have been receiving a lot of attention within VA/VHA and for which some key ORD leadership are devoting their attention. By now, the Field should have heard about the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (or PACT Act) related to toxic / military exposures. It is considered one of the largest legislative acts for VA benefits, care, and research in some time. Previous Field calls indicated that ORD expects to announce Requests for Applications on military exposures research in the upcoming year. Under the PACT Act, ORD will be organizing an interagency work group to help identify priorities and needs in military exposures research. Furthermore, it is expected that implementation of the PACT Act will have operational and other impacts that go beyond research and Field research leadership should continue to follow discussions locally on it to determine any opportunities and/or impacts from it.

The Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans (MAMMO) Act if legislation on mammography and prevention of breast cancer. Its focus on breast cancer will have ties to the Cancer Moonshot (which also will be related to the PACT Act). Clinical services and research/ORD will continue to work together as part of a broader partnership in cancer care for Veterans.

In addition to COVID work, VHA has now broadened its focus on “High Consequence Infections” as part of larger interagency efforts on emerging infectious diseases. ORD, through Drs. Vickey Davey and Jane Battles among others, is contributing to a national Monkeypox research agenda and part of other Office of Science and Technology Policy run out of the White House on Ebola.

- **New ACOS-R Quick Start Guide**

Following the recent national ACOS-R meeting, an ORD team is working to identify “quick wins” to help with the success of ACOS-Rs, especially ones new to the position. Shortly, a request for input on a “Quick Start Guide” will be sent to the Field. This Guide is intended to be a resource for an ACOS-R’s first day on the job to help be better connected and know where to go for information. ORD appreciates any/all feedback that can be given.

- **Protected Time Efforts**

For awareness, ORD, through Grant Huang, has begun participating in talks involving clinical and operational partners on the issue of Protected Time, also referenced in context of non-bookable hours for research. An updated guidance (2020) on amount of protected time for various research activities is available. However, an observation is that approaches to handling time prior to receiving an award (e.g., preparing for merit review submissions, regulatory submissions, etc.) are often handled on an individual basis. Furthermore, there appear to be few written approaches that could help inform a broader approach for guidance on protected time. Requests for information will be sent as discussions occur, but the Field is encouraged to identify documents or other information that may be helpful in communicating actual needs for time to do research.

- **Research Protections & Policy**

- ***Optional VAIRRS Financial Conflict of Interest***      Angela Foster  
**Module deployment**

ORD has introduced a financial conflict of interest module in IRBNet that is available for use by VA Facilities. It is an optional module that has made the OGE Form 450-alt VA – Research Financial Disclosure of Interest Statement into a SMART form. The optional IRBNet COI module was piloted at 25 VA sites on September 30th. ORD wishes to reinforce that this optional IRBNET COI module has no separate ORD Research Financial Conflict of Interest Directive associated with it. The proposed Research Financial Conflict of Interest Directive is still in the review process, and at the present time we do not have an expected date of when the directive will be published. Again, No VA Facility is required to use the IRBNet COI Module at this time, and VA sites may continue to use their current review processes.

ORD will be conducting a webinar on October 18th at 2PM EST, to discuss and demonstrate the IRBNet COI module. VA sites may decide locally if the module supports your existing process and, if so, whether you would like to use the module. FCOI Administrator training on the use of the module will be provided to any site that chooses to adopt the module. Please send all questions to [vairrs@va.gov](mailto:vairrs@va.gov).

### **3. Finance Updates**

John Verwiel

Mr. Verwiel briefed on the prior year's success on Carryover reduction. Plans are to continue and improve accountability at Stations. Current continuing resolution status was discussed and 4Q RAFT Expenditure report completion status were presented. The Field was informed about FDIS reporting and Finance initiative training opportunities.

### **4. Technology Transfer Program (TTP) updates**

John Kaplann, PhD, JD, PE  
Rebecca Megabiaw

Ms. Megabiaw demonstrated a system for Invention Disclosures and Certifications that can now be submitted by inventors online through VA TTP's Wellspring Sophia Knowledge Management System (KMS). Key details include:

- Inventors can create an ID.me account to access the system for the first time.
- Instructions for inventors on submitting disclosures and certifications, and for creating an account and logging into the system are here:  
[https://www.research.va.gov/programs/tech\\_transfer/disclosure\\_certification.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/programs/tech_transfer/disclosure_certification.cfm)
- ACOS/Rs and AO/Rs should have existing PIV accounts, or can request an internal account to be created by emailing [vattpsophia@va.gov](mailto:vattpsophia@va.gov).
- ACOS/Rs and AO/Rs have "Organization Leader" permissions, allowing them to view all invention and IP records for any inventions where the primary VA inventor is affiliated with their VA facility.
- All inventor certification form review/signature is conducted online, as of 8/15/2022.
- ACOS/Rs and AO/Rs will receive an email when certification review or other action needs to be taken in the system, with instructions and a link to the specific record to be acted upon. The email will be sent from [admin@wellspringsoftware.net](mailto:admin@wellspringsoftware.net). Please ensure that this email is "whitelisted" on your Outlook account.

Direct link to the TTP Sophia login page:

[https://www.research.va.gov/programs/tech\\_transfer/disclosure\\_certification.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/programs/tech_transfer/disclosure_certification.cfm)

### **5. Service Funding Opportunities, Reviews and Updates**

- **Review results for ORD research supplements to promote diversity**

Shakeria L. Cohen

Dr. Cohen was introduced as a new co-chair for the ORD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workgroup.

Intent to fund notices for the following ORD research supplements were sent to the field by September 28, 2022.

- RD-22-029 - [Research Supplements to Promote Diversity \(I01, Type 3\)](#) – mentored research supplements for early career scientists from underrepresented populations.

11 out of 15 supplements proposals reviewed were funded. The breakdown by service was: 5 from HSRD, 3 for BLRD, 2 for RRD, and 1 from CSRD. Research topic areas for funded supplements ranged from pain/substance use disorders, to health disparities research, remote delivery of care, diabetes, deployment health, and precision oncology.

- 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.

3 out of 9 proposals were funded, with 2 from BLRD and 1 from HSRD investigators. Topics included pre-clinical studies in cardiology and oncology and health equity research for Transgender Veterans.

For more information: [Carol.Fowler@va.gov](mailto:Carol.Fowler@va.gov).

- **RR&D Updates**

Patricia A. Dorn, Ph.D.

### **Moral Injury Research – Delivering Discoveries**



Brett T. Litz, PhD, Director of the Mental Health Core of the Massachusetts Veterans Epidemiological Research and Information Center at the VA Boston Healthcare System, has been leading the way in *moral injury* research.

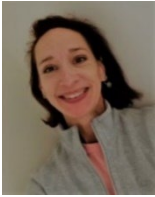
The term “moral injury” describes the difficulties that people face after doing high stakes things that violate what is right and just or after being forced to experience others' immoral actions. One’s morality, or sense of what is right and wrong, comes from family and community. One example is the “golden rule,” which is the idea that one should treat others as they hope to be treated. (from: VA Moral Injury website provided below)

Based on RR&D funded research over the past 5 years, a new tool (Moral Injury Outcome Scale) has been developed to assess moral injury in Veterans, and a website initiated that provides information for Veterans, their family members, and Clinicians. Please visit the website to learn more.

[Moral Injury - MIRECC / CoE \(va.gov\)](#)

- **Announcement:**

**Please Join ORD In Welcoming Ms. Kristy Benton-Grover To Her New Position As RR&D Program Analysis & Review Section (PARS) Administrator!**



Kristy joined the Office of Research and Development (ORD) Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) in October 2009 as Program Manager of the Scientific Merit Review Board and then joined the Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D) as Management Analyst in October 2013. She serves as a Federal Advisory Committee Designated Federal Officer or alternate and manages all administrative aspects of the scientific merit review process for rehabilitation research award applications spanning all four review cycles each year. Special projects have included leading the ORD working group for transitioning to Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) and Final Report submissions and developing the scientific program managers' RPPR review/approval checklist in eRA and use/processing of Pre-application (I02) submissions to eRA as the letter of intent for RR&D. Kristy serves as alternate ORD lead representative/resource for technical and administrative aspects of the NIH eRA system, serves as a VA representative on various NIH working groups, manages communications within ORD's eRA mailbox and drafts/maintains RR&D FOA/RFAs, the *VA-ORD Application Guide SF 424 (R&R)* and *VA-ORD RPPR and Final Report User Guides* used by field research program staff and investigators.

Prior to joining ORD, Kristy held various mid- and executive-level management positions with the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). As Senior Director of the Executive and Governance Department, she assisted the APTA President and CEO in the execution of their duties, served as liaison to the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, House of Delegates and related appointed/elected committees (Nominating and Elections, Reference/Bylaws and Honors/Awards), drafted reports and managed logistics for Executive and Board meetings and annual House session. Kristy was a member of the Executive Staff Team that lead the administration of national headquarters and advancement of the physical therapist profession.

Kristy has a BFA from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and professional certifications from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) - Certified Association Executive (CAE); International Congress of Distinguished Awards - Certified Awards Administrator (CAA); and the Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP) - Certified Government Meeting Professional (CGMP). She lives in Ocean City, MD (on the bayside) with her husband Dave and 14-year old cat Sparky. Sons (Benton and Lance) and stepdaughter (Bryony) live in Virginia. Kristy enjoys walking on the boardwalk/beach, paddling her SUP or boating on the bay, weight training, reading and babysitting her two grand-kitties.

- Review Updates:

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

*Winter 2023 - Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:*

- Updated RFAs published – September 28, 2022
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver requests) submission deadline – November 1, 2022
- Full award application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – December 12, 2022 (as December 10 falls on a Saturday)  
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 – February 21 - March 1, 2023
- Scores released – March 3, 2023
- Summary Statements released – March 24, 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – by early April 2023

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

- NEW RFAs published – March 3, 2022
- A **NEW** Pre-application (I02) RFA **RX-23-101** published for the I50 award mechanism. Pre-application and List of Key Personnel submission deadline – September 1, 2022.
- Full award application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – January 11, 2023  
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 – April 11-12, 2023
- Scores and Summary Statements released – April/May 2023
- Administrative Review/Site Visits – May/June 2023
- Intent-to-Award notifications – Subsequent to site visit

*Fall 2022 – SPiRE:*

- Updated SPiRE RFA published – June 27, 2022
- Pre-application (LOI and waiver requests) submission deadline – August 1, 2022
- Full award application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – September 12, 2022 (as September 10 falls on a Saturday)  
NOTE: Biographical Sketch Format template (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (**Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 09/30/2024**)) **is required for application submissions**
- Scientific Review – October 24, 2022
- Scores and Summary Statements released – November 16, 2022
- Intent-to-Award notifications – early December 2022

- **HSRD Updates**

Liza Catucci

The eRA Intent to Fund notices for the HSR&D Summer 2022 SMRB cycle were sent out on Monday, October 17<sup>th</sup>. PIs should have received the intent to fund/not fund emails in their inboxes the following morning. 17 IIRs, 9 Pilots, 6 Disrupted Care Proposals and 7 CDAs were awarded.

On Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> emails were sent by the HSR&D SMRB Program Manager to all awarded PIs (copying the ACOS/AO, and SPM) letting them know about the mandatory JIT CyberSeminar to be held on **Tuesday, November 1, 2022, from 2:00 – 3:30 pm ET** to go over JIT requirements. To register for the CyberSeminar click the link below.

<https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?RGID=r0becc0ca816e110b33d6ce162322e60a>

- *Winter 2023 SMRB Cycle:*

- New and revised RFAs were posted on the intranet on September 22, 2022 and we had an RFA CyberSeminar on September 29, 2022.
- Please review the RFAs thoroughly to check for any changes in requirements and to ensure compliance. The major updates to the RFAs include:
  - New Rural Health RFA (HX-23-032)
  - Updated HSRD Priorities Document (dated September 2022)
  - Updated HSR&D Gaps in Research (Parent & Pilot RFAs)
  - Update to Waiver for non-Veteran Enrollment
  - Updated CTSP Transcription process
  - New requirement and updated guidance for Letters of Support (LOS)
    - A table of contents for the letters of support is now required that lists each letter writer's name, position, and office/institution.
    - Although not required this cycle, electronic signatures are strongly encouraged to verify that the letter writer wrote the letter of support.
- The HSR&D Intent-to-Submit in ART will be open from **October 21, 2022 to November 4, 2022** (at 8:00 pm EST).
- The first day to submit full applications (using Grants.gov Workspace or eRA ASSIST) is November 15, 2022, and the last possible submission day is December 12, 2022.
- HSR&D's Scientific Merit Review Board and Career Development Award review meetings are both scheduled to take place February 27 – March 3, 2023.

*Long COVID:*

ORD/HSRD is finalizing the review of concept papers on the Long COVID PBRN, and we have a new lead on Long COVID – our AAAS Fellow Dr. Amelia Schlak who joined HSR&D in September.

- **CSR&D Updates**

Miriam Smyth, PhD

Waivers to exceed budget cap for Merit Awards and LOIs for Clinical Trials and Career Development awards are due on November 1, 2022.

*BLRD/CSRD reminder:* currently our scientific portfolio managers are preparing for review. The SPMs should not be contacted about any application that has been accepted for review.

- **BLR&D Updates**

Holly Krull, PhD

- *ORD Updates:*

[FIELD-BASED PLANNING MEETINGS TO FOSTER COLLABORATIVE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY, MULTI-SITE STUDIES TO IMPROVE VETERAN HEALTH \(va.gov\)](#) Funding Opportunity Announcement has been released. **It is a cross-Service FOA with applications due 10/31.** Submission requires a completed [Budget Template](#)

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 center (GRECC, MIRECC, etc.) or of a center funded by one of the ORD services (HSRD COIN, RRD Center, etc.).

Program Point of Contact: Christopher Bever, MD, MBA, Deputy Chief Research and Development Officer, Investigators, Scientific Review and Management at [Christopher.Bever@va.gov](mailto:Christopher.Bever@va.gov)

**ORD Shared Equipment Evaluation Program (ShEEP) (IS1):**

BLR&D is pleased to release a new RFA for ShEEP application, [BX-23-015](#). Submission is open from Oct 17 to Nov 15, 2022. The maximum cost allowable per application is now increased to \$700,000.

There will be no RFA for ShEEP-Imaging Core this year.

We will also be accepting LAM requests starting November 1; LAM funding opportunity will be released next week. Deadline for submitting LAM request is December 31, 2022.

For question, please contact Alex Chiu, [alex.chiu@va.gov](mailto:alex.chiu@va.gov)



- *BLRD Updates:*

*Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) Award:* CSI nomination package deadline is Monday January 9, 2023. Investigators who are eligible have:

- A minimum 5/8th VA paid clinical appointment with a current BLRD Merit award at the time of submission of a competitive BLRD Merit renewal application.
- A competitive BLRD Merit renewal application which has received an excellent to very good score (< 20th percentile).
- An outstanding record of scholarly productivity including national peer-reviewed research funding as Principal Investigator (co-investigator is not sufficient) for at least 8 years while serving as a VA clinician.
- A strong record of contribution to local and national VA research and/or clinical programs.
- In good standing with their Service Chief and/or Chief of Staff.

Please submit nomination package on time to the [BL/CS mailbox](#). For question, please contact Arun Sharma, [arun.sharma@va.gov](mailto:arun.sharma@va.gov)

*BLRD Town Hall:* Friday October 28 1-2 PM EDT

*LOIs are due November 1:*

- Collaborative Merit
- Lead Isolation and Optimization and Pre-IND studies of Drugs and Biologics
- Career Development
- Pilot Projects
  - Validate Novel Animal of Cell-based Models of Diseases
  - Validation of Clinically Relevant Findings from Population Studies
  - Validate Clinically Significant Novel Therapeutic Target(s) and Approach(es)

*LOIs Due December 1:*

- BLRD Data Science Merit Review Award