



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Research & Development

## Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, November 21, 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 especially as the Thanksgiving holiday approaches. He also highlighted a few enterprise transformation accomplishments that have been communicated recently to ORD staff and the Field Research Advisory Committee.

These items included:

- Organizational alignment – streamlining the ORD organizational structure into 6 major units reporting to the Chief Research and Development Officer
- Actively Managed Portfolios (AMPs) – launching of the Precision Oncology AMP with plans for possibly two more to begin in FY23
- IT and Data Governance – completion of an initial assessment of IT software and systems
- Finance processes – several field trainings that were driven by survey responses from the field
- Centralized HR – as discussed in other forums, efforts are underway to transition ORD funded positions to a central unit to handle the various processes to support research
- Field Enterprise Research Support Services – central contract has been established to support more common needs for starting up research in the field
- Partnered Research Program – new office to facilitate partnerships with industry on multi-site clinical trials

### 2. ORD / Research Enterprise

Grant Huang, MPH, PhD

#### • ACOS-R & Deputies Directory

ORD's Field Directory now includes Deputy ACOS-Rs and is being managed by the ART Team. The link and contact for updates were on the agenda and/or can be directed to [ART@va.gov](mailto:ART@va.gov).

#### • Future ACOS-R and AO meetings

Notice was given to the upcoming national AO meeting in Salt Lake City, UT targeted for April 2023. Also, ORD will begin efforts on discussing another annual ACOS-R meeting following the success of the recent one in September. More info will be forthcoming when available.

### 3. Research Protections & Policy

Molly Klote, MD, CIP

- American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding

*ARP IT funding* – More than \$60M in FY23 IT funding was appropriated for ORDs use. The line items that were identified are actively working to execute their funding. The Legacy systems line item is a review of 17 systems at the Martinsburg, WV VAMC run by the Research and Development Computing Center (OIT). We are assessing the current use of these legacy systems and rationalizing them where possible.

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

John Kaplan, PhD, JD, PE

- *New Staff*
  - Ms. Renee Shaw – Field Technology Transfer Specialist (TTS) in Atlanta
  - Dr. Rebecca Holmes – Field TTS in Chicago
  - Ms. Paige Zimmerman – Field TTS in Missouri
  - Ms. Trina Voss – Field TTS in Portland, Oregon
- *On-Line Submission of Invention Disclosures and Certification Information* -
  - Some issues with inventors registering
- *Determination of Rights* - Continue to work to have TTP issue Determination of Rights
- *Certification Forms* - Continue to need help with outstanding Certification Forms

### 5. Field Operationals Updates

Tony Laracuente

- Various Field updates

- *CC101* – plans are being reviewed and decision will be made in the next few weeks.

*CC101* plans are under review and should be completed by mid-December.

- *ePROMISE* – there are significant changes required in the data field. This is part of the plan to marry up with VAIRRS.
- AO meeting is scheduled for the week of April 25 in Salt Lake.
- *Centralized HR is in process* - it will include WOCs and IPAs.
- *RPO Contracting* - training is being setup for mid-December.

- *The Program Assistance Consultation Education Review (PACER)* – These efforts are moving forward. We have conducted 8 formal visits and have a few more planned over the next few months. The most recent one included several facilities including our newest program in VA – Prescott where we were able to sit down and discuss the many challenges sites face in just getting started. ORD recognizes these challenges and appreciates the sites being forthright about them and providing us with potential solutions. During our most recent visit we saw collaborative spaces between the VA and the University and were able to discuss with the affiliate opportunities for growth. These visits provide us with insight on not only challenges you face but also the great collaborations you have established. So, thank you to Dr. Aguayo and his team in Phoenix and to Dr. Chase and her new team in Prescott. If interested contact Tony Laracuate, Dr. Karen Jeans or Dr. Alex. Chiu
- Challenges with WOCs. ORD is aware of the challenges the field is facing with the recently published guidance from HR regarding the appointment of Non-Citizens specifically J1 and H1B visa holders. The guidance is going through some major discussions at the highest levels of HR and with OGC personnel law. Hopefully guidance will be forwarded soon on addressing these hires. Please note that the WOC appointment and IPA details for non-citizens are controlled by law and require proper vetting. This is fairly complicated and we are in discussions to make sure that we understand the legal basis behind some of these decisions. More info will be coming in the near future. If you have concerns or questions, please email Tony Laracuate.

## 6. ORD Strategic Initiative for Research & EHR Synergy (OSIRES) Updates

Maria Souden, MSI, PhD

- A **delay in deployments** has recently been announced by the VA Under Secretary for Health to address challenges with the system and make sure it is functioning optimally for Veterans and for VA health care personnel. The new EHR will not be deployed at additional facilities until June 2023 at the earliest. A new go-live schedule is not yet finalized, but once announced will be shared here and posted on the **EHRM Integration Office (EHRM IO) website.**
- OSIRES and ORD (Molly Klote, executive champion) are working with VHA clinical leadership and the EHRM Integration Office to ensure the new EHR is ready to support research studies safely, with full regulatory compliance, and while maintaining scientific integrity. System, training, deployment, and sustainment enhancements are under development through technical, program management, and contract mechanisms. The first level 1A facility (major research program) to implement the new EHR is projected to be Ann Arbor, potentially in July 2023.
- Guidance for Addressing EHRM in Grant Applications OSIRES and PROVEN (the VA Coordinating Hub to Promote Research Optimizing Veteran-Centric EHR Networks) have updated HSR&D's **Guidance for Addressing EHRM in**

**Grant Applications**. The document offers guidance on how to address the EHR Modernization in applications to HSR&D or QUERI effective immediately insofar as the proposed research relies on the use of the VA EHR or data from it.

- Data generated from current deployments of the new EHR are being sent to the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) daily, where they are available in CDWork2 (Millennium format) and CDWork3 (partially integrated into VistA CDW). These data are now available for request by approved research and quality improvement projects. See the newly released **VA Millennium Electronic Health Record (EHR) Data** page on the VHA Data Portal for information about this data source and how to request it for your projects. Data documentation and education can be found on VIREC's **VA Millennium EHR Data Documentation & Resources** page.
- Questions or concerns may be directed to **ResearchEHRMHelp@va.gov**.

## **7. 2021 Annual Report Data**

Kim Collins, MBA, MLNHA

Eight reports were late, which created several challenges as the time necessary for completion is already extremely tight. Many others were on time but had to be returned due to errors. Due to an excessive amount of errors, NPPO will be asking for your help to remedy this by having the numbers and the reports validated prior to leaving the medical centers.

In a positive development, revenues were up by 12% and VA researchers brought in \$313 million dollars in revenue. Seventy-three percent was from Federal funds, up 3% from last year. The biggest reason for this increase was the Payroll Protection Program which helped cover salary expenses not covered by other Federal funds. These were loans, but they have all been forgiven.

Two percent was from non-governmental grants, clinical trials, other funding foundations, e.g., Parkinson's Foundation, Alzheimer's Association, etc. Expenses were \$294 Million, administrative expenses remain relatively low at 17%. Travel expenses continued to decline in 2021, this will increase in 2022. The NPCs have \$213 M in net worth –8% increase from 2020.

Two NPCs were cited for material weaknesses in FY 2021, these are of great concern as several of them are repeat from 2020. NPPO will be working with them to remedy these serious findings.

If you have any questions, please email [Kimberly.collins@va.gov](mailto:Kimberly.collins@va.gov).

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

- **ORD Research Supplements to promote Diversity and Journal of Health Equity**

Carol Fowler, PhD

## **Special Supplement update**

ORD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work group (ORD DEI WG) is preparing the reissue of research supplement RFAs to promote diversity for Spring/Summer 2023.

Announcements will be forthcoming for an informational webinar to be held by February 2023.

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

The ORD DEIWG co-chairs would like to thank those who have contributed content and effort to a special ORD-sponsored special collection for [Health Equity](#), that will highlight some of the great work ORD and VA investigators have accomplished in health equity research for Veterans. Content is under ORD review and the special collection will be published in Spring, 2023.

For more information: [Shakeria.Cohen@va.gov](mailto:Shakeria.Cohen@va.gov).

- **Investigations, Scientific Review and Management Updates**

Christopher T. Bever, Jr., MD

- On October 1, 2022, the Services moved under ISRM, but will continue to operate as they currently do for FY2023 (no changes to FOAs or the application review process)
- Over the next 1-2 years, the funding will shift from a focus on disciplines and methods to a focus on areas of Veteran need.
- This new alignment of research will occur in phases and involves the establishment of Managed Portfolios and Broad Portfolios
- There will be no changes to currently funded research, and the scientific submission and review process will remain the same until the service transition is complete.

- **RR&D Updates**

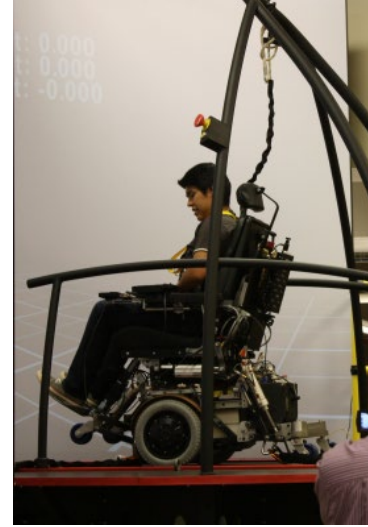
Tiffany Asqueri

- Announcements:

**InventEd & Rory Cooper, PhD**



(R) Rory Cooper, PhD (L) Joyce Ward, JD,  
Director, Office of Education  
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office



MEBot

Dr. Rory Cooper was the Keynote speaker at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's InventEd 2022 Conference. InventEd was for anyone currently engaged in Invention Education and ready to work with peers in a design sprint workshop. Dr Cooper is Director and founder of The Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL) which are a part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as the RR&D [Center for Wheelchairs and Assistive Robotics Engineering](#).

The US Patent and Trademark Office released a new educational web-site to provide support to K-12 teachers and students to be innovators, creators, and inventors. As a part of the site is a game to match inventors to inventions that leads to more information. The Mobility Enhancement Robotic Wheelchair (MEBot) from HERL is part of the game. The MEBot tackles both curbs and challenging terrains. Research and further MEBot development is supported by VA RR&D through a Career Development Award to Dr. Candiotti. The card match game can be found at: <https://www.equiphq.org/5/activity/card-match>

Dr. Cooper said "It is pretty cool to have our work touch so many lives and to help shape young people. I had the opportunity to be Keynote Speaker for USPTO inventEd Conference where the site and game were revealed to teachers, federal agencies, and foundations from around the world."

- [Review Updates](#)

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW TIMELINES (refer to applicable [FOARFA](#) 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 – 28, 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 9, 2022
- Intent-to-Award notifications – late November 2022

• **HSRD Updates**

David Atkins, MD, MPH

**Scientific Merit Review Board Update**

*Summer 2022 Cycle*

- Funding decisions were communicated from our staff directly to the research offices and from eRA (with Notices of Intent to-Fund or Not-to-Fund) on October 18, 2022.
- Funding was approved for the following applications: 23 – IIRs/SDRs, 9 - Pilot, and 7 – CDAs.
- JIT opened for the Summer 2022 awarded projects on November 1, 2022.

### *Winter 2023 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 was open from October 21, 2022 to November 4, 2022 (at 8:00 pm EST). We received 94 IIR, 16 Pilot, and 21 CDA.
- 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.

### Updates on Long COVID Research

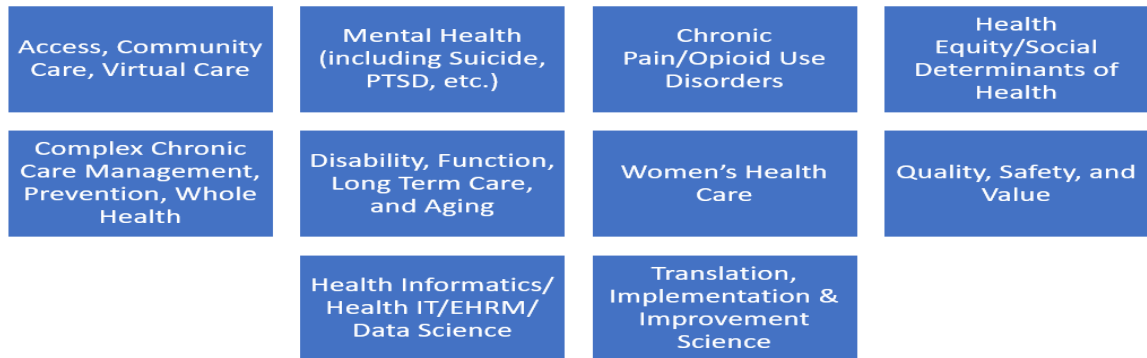
HSRD is in the process of establishing support for a Long COVID Practice Based Research Network (PBRN) and associated pilots. The Long COVID PBRN will harness the national network of VA Long COVID clinics to reduce barriers to multi-site Long COVID research and guide policy and practice. The Long COVID pilots will leverage the PBRN to conduct rapid studies to answer high priority research questions to improve clinical practice at the point of care. The PBRN and the associated pilots will begin their work in FY2023. Additionally, ORD recently awarded funding to three collaborative merit awards (two in HSRD, one in CSRD). The collaborative merit award RFA for this initiative was a cross ORD effort involving BLRD, CSRD, HSRD, and RRD to identify and fund research to address post-COVID conditions in the Veteran population. An HSRD project, led by Drs. McAndrew and Nugent, will leverage knowledge of chronic multi-symptom illness to improve post-COVID care and outcomes for Veterans. Another HSRD project, led by Drs. Mohanty and Knight, will focus on identifying post-COVID phenotypes and related health inequities. The CSRD project, led by Drs. Cook and Lindheimer, will evaluate the effects of exercise on the gut microbiome on



neuroinflammation and post-acute sequelae SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC). If you have any questions about ORD's long COVID research, please contact [amelia.schlak@va.gov](mailto:amelia.schlak@va.gov).

## Proposal for Broad Health Systems Research Portfolio

### Priority Domains in Health Systems Portfolio



- **BLR&D Updates**

Holly Krull, PhD

*Review Cycle:* Reminder that PIs of submitted applications should not contact SPMs until funding decisions have been made.

*Middleton Award:* Nominations for the 2023 Middleton Award are due in ORD on **February 1, 2023**.

The Middleton award, BLR&D's highest honor for outstanding scientific achievement. We are looking for VA scientists whose research program has had a substantial real-world impact on the healthcare of Veterans. The nominee should stand head and shoulders above his/her peers in terms of their impact on a research field of prime importance to VA's research mission.

More information and submission instructions for the Middleton Award can be found at: <https://www.research.va.gov/services/blrd/middleton.cfm>

SPMs for the Middleton and Barnwell awards will hold office hours to answer questions about the submission process on December 12, 2022 at 3 PM EST.

#### *Link to Middleton/Barnwell Office Hours*

Meeting number (access code): 2762 956 3428

Meeting password: Jq9djJs5G6\*

<https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=m0da10ced5212bc8a76fcbd8febf4a521>

**Tap to join from a mobile device (attendees only)**

+14043971596,,27629563428### USA Toll Number

*Eligibility:* Eligibility applications are due December 1, 2022.

*NOTES:* there is a new form on the website to submit applications for eligibility. There are also new guidelines on how to submit a package in IRBNET. Please DO NOT USE old forms.

*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)

- **CSR&D Updates**

Miriam Smyth, PhD

*Review Cycle:* Currently our scientific portfolio managers are preparing for review. The SPMs should not be contacted about any application that is under review.

*The John B. Barnwell Award (Barnwell Award):* It is the Clinical Science Research and Development Service's highest honor for outstanding achievement in clinical research that advances the diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of diseases and disorders in the Veteran population.

The 2023 Barnwell Award Applications are due COB February 1, 2023.

Nominations must come from the VA Medical Center through the local R&D Office. To be eligible for the Barnwell Award, nominees must meet specific qualifications please review the program guide and instructions posted on the website for further details or contact Dr. Mark Roltsch if you have questions. His email is [mark.roltsch@va.gov](mailto:mark.roltsch@va.gov)

Drs. Roltsch will conduct **WebEx office hours on December 12 at 3:00 pm** to answer questions about the Barnwell award. We will send an invite to this meeting to all ACOSs.

The information is found on the ORD website just search Barnwell Award

The website is [https://www.research.va.gov/services/csrd/research-awards.cfm?\\_ga=2.56572011.1990953416.1542631466-377307463.1536175624#barnwell](https://www.research.va.gov/services/csrd/research-awards.cfm?_ga=2.56572011.1990953416.1542631466-377307463.1536175624#barnwell)