



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
INVESTIGATORS, SCIENTIFIC REVIEW AND MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM GUIDE 1202.08
RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

As of May 1, 2025, the Program Guides for 1) John B. Barnwell Award (Program Guide 1202.07), 2) Paul B. Magnuson Award (Program Guide 1203.06), 3) William S. Middleton Award (Program Guide 1202.05), 4) Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Systems Research (Program Guide 1204.04) have been rescinded and replaced with this Program Guide. This Program Guide replaces all prior official ORD guidance for these awards.

ISSUANCE DATE: May 22, 2025

RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. PURPOSE..... | 1 |
| 2. BACKGROUND | 1 |
| 3. SCOPE..... | 3 |
| 4. ELIGIBILITY | 3 |
| 5. NOMINATION PROCESS..... | 4 |
| 6. RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD APPLICATION..... | 4 |
| 7. RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD REVIEW COMMITTEE..... | 4 |
| 8. AWARD CRITERIA | 4 |
| 9. RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD DETAILS | 5 |
| 10. PROCEDURES & RESPONSIBILITIES:..... | 5 |

ORD RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Program Guide provides information and procedures relating to the nomination, application, review, and selection process for the annual Office of Research and Development (ORD) lifetime achievement research awards for outstanding scientific achievements in biomedical, clinical, rehabilitation and health systems research that advance the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and disorders in the Veteran population. ORD sponsors four (4) awards annually, which are detailed in the background section, below.

2. BACKGROUND:

A. The John B. Barnwell Award is ORD's highest honor for outstanding achievement in Veteran-centric clinical research. For this award, clinical research encompasses the diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of diseases and disorders in the Veteran population. The research must prioritize research on Veterans' unique health needs, experiences, and priorities by focusing on conditions that disproportionately affect Veterans. The Brain, Behavioral and Mental Health (BBMH) Broad Portfolio and the Cooperative Studies Program co-sponsor the Barnwell Award.

a. The Barnwell Award was established in 2007 to honor John Blair Barnwell, M.D., a distinguished educator and physician-scientist, who was the Director of Research and Education at the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)) Central Office in the 1940s. Prior to joining VA, Dr. Barnwell was a Professor at the University of Michigan and held positions as Director of the Tuberculosis Division at the Veterans Administration (1946 to 1960) and President of the National Tuberculosis Society (1946). Honors and awards received by Dr. Barnwell include the Trudeau Medal (1950), at the time the highest honor bestowed by the National Tuberculosis Society; the Dearholt Medal from the Mississippi Valley Conference on Tuberculosis; and the Bruce H. Douglas Award from the American Thoracic Society.

b. Dr. Barnwell's contributions to VA include the formation of the Veterans Administration/Army-Navy Cooperative Studies in the Chemotherapy of Tuberculosis Program, which pioneered the model of the multi-site clinical trials to test treatments for tuberculosis following World War II. Furthermore, Dr. Barnwell's leadership inspired enthusiasm and passion for the care of patients and fostered a tradition of top-level clinician-researchers within VA. Through his efforts, the depth and quality of VA patient care was greatly enhanced with the influx of broad, multi-disciplined talent in medicine and science.

c. In the spirit of Dr. Barnwell's prolific professional accomplishments, the Barnwell Award aims to recognize senior VHA investigators who have achieved national and international acclaim for clinical research accomplishments in areas of prime importance to VA's research mission and who have also demonstrated a high level of clinical commitment to the Veteran-centric patient population.

B. The Paul B. Magnuson Award is ORD's highest honor for outstanding achievement in rehabilitation research within the VA. Paul B. Magnuson, M.D., was a bone and joint

surgeon who continuously sought new treatments and devices for assisting his patients as they faced unique situations presented by their disability. He saw patients as individuals and asserted, "People are no more alike in the shape and functional movements of their bodies and limbs than they are in their faces." The Magnuson Award was established in 1998 and is sponsored by the Rehabilitation Research Development and Translation (RRDT) Broad Portfolio.

a. As a person, he was a champion of the underdog. As a physician, he saw his duty, not only as curing, but also as restoring a patient "to his family, his job, and his life." As a researcher, he noted that as long as there is disease and injury, the problems of medicine will never be completely solved. As an advocate for Veterans, he was the architect of the VA health care system as it is known today.

b. World War II not only filled VA beds with patients, but it also left young physicians who withdrew from their medical training to serve, with no offices to return to. While civilian hospitals could not provide enough residencies to hire these professionals, VA hospitals were filling with soldiers but could not hire enough physicians to care for them because of the rules and regulations of the Civil Service. As administrator under General Paul Hawley, and subsequently as Chief Medical Director from 1948 to 1951, Dr. Magnuson argued for physicians, nurses, and dentists to be hired outside of the Civil Service, under what is now known as "Title 38." In addition, he created a system for medical school affiliations to staff VA hospitals with residents, interns, and chiefs of service.

c. Dr. Magnuson's medical career outside VA is equally impressive. In addition to his patient care practice and service as Chairman of the Department of Bone and Joint Surgery at the Northwestern University Medical School, he conceived of and founded The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, was a Founding Member of the American Board of Surgery, and was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Dr. Magnuson left a remarkable legacy to VA and to the rehabilitation professional community. Through this award, ORD remembers and honors this legacy.

C. The William S. Middleton Award is ORD's highest honor for scientific achievement in Veteran-centric biomedical research. For this award, biomedical research encompasses foundational and translational research that prioritizes research on the unique health needs, experiences, and priorities of Veterans by focusing on conditions that disproportionately affect Veterans. The Middleton Award is sponsored by the Medical Health (MedHealth) Broad Portfolio.

a. The Middleton Award was established in 1960 to honor William S. Middleton, M.D., who was a distinguished educator, physician-scientist, and VA Chief Medical Director from 1955 to 1963. Dr. Middleton's service to medicine, Veterans, and the country spanned over 60 years, beginning in 1911 when he earned his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He began teaching at the University of Wisconsin the following year, becoming a full professor in 1933, followed by his appointment as Dean of the medical school, a seat he held for the following 20 years.

b. Dr. Middleton's contributions to VA are unparalleled. He was appointed the Chief Medical Director at VA in 1955. Dr. Middleton was instrumental in initiating and stimulating VA medical research, which included developing an official VA research program. He established and appointed the first Advisory Committee on Research. By the time he retired in 1963, as a result of his commitment and initiative, over 7,500 research projects, including VA cooperative studies, had been undertaken by VA.

c. As a teacher, clinician, and investigator, Dr. Middleton set the highest standards. He won numerous awards and was elected as an Honorary Fellow or member of more than a dozen national and international societies. He contributed more than 300 scholarly papers related to internal medicine, medical education, and medical history.

D. The Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Systems Research was established in 1998 in recognition of the importance of health systems research and its vital link to the health care of Veterans and the public. VHA annually invites nominations for this award in recognition of the highest level of achievement in Health Systems Research (HSR), inclusive of implementation and evaluation contributions aligned with VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI). The Under Secretary's Award is co-sponsored by the HSR Broad Portfolio and QUERI.

3. SCOPE: The ORD Research Achievement Awards are given for outstanding scientific achievements in biomedical, clinical, rehabilitation and health systems research performed in VA that advance the diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment of diseases and disorders in the Veteran population. Although the awards may occasionally recognize a single exceptionally influential contribution, it is generally expected that recipients will have made notable sustained contributions that lead to treatment advances related to diseases and conditions that are relevant to Veterans' health care.

4. ELIGIBILITY: To be eligible for any of the ORD Research Achievement Awards, nominees must meet all the following requirements:

(1) **VA Employment Status.** A current VA paid appointment of at least 25 hours per week (5/8ths) or an approved waiver.

(2) **Research Contributions.** The research contributions leading to the nomination must have been carried out in VA and must relate clearly to the mission of the award as described in the background section for each award, above.

(3) **Presence at VA.** Performed research at a VA facility for at least the previous five (5) years.

(4) **Active Funding History.** Minimum of 10 cumulative years serving as Principal Investigator (PI) or Study Chair of funded VA Merit Awards, VA Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Awards, VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) awards, National Institutes of Health (NIH), or Department of Defense (DoD) grants. Note: A History of serving as PI on VA Merit, VA QUERI Award or as Study Chair on CSP

awards is especially valued.

(5) **First-time Awardee.** Has not received an ORD Research Achievement Award previously.

5. NOMINATION PROCESS: Applicants for the award may be nominated in two ways:

a. VA medical facilities may submit one (1) application per Research Achievement Award annually to ORD.

b. ORD program staff, or Scientific Merit Review Board(s) (through the Broad Portfolio Director) may identify qualified applicants and invite them to submit applications by the specified application submission deadline. *These applicants must apply through their local R&D Office and will be subject to review and selection by their local R&D Committee (RDC) and/or Medical Center Director (MCD).*

6. RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD APPLICATIONS: Detailed instructions on preparing and submitting award application package can be found on the VA research website.

7. RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD REVIEW COMMITTEE(s):

a. The committee consists of researchers with and without a VA affiliation, and former award recipients. Members are chosen for their scientific expertise and knowledge of the scientific review process, and VA research priorities and goals.

b. Once the application submission period has concluded, the Award Program Manager organizes the review of the applications.

c. Applications are reviewed based on the criteria outlined in paragraph 8, and the committee's recommendation is forwarded to the Executive Director of the sponsoring Broad Portfolio and co-sponsoring program, for consideration and, as appropriate, recommendation to Investigators Scientific Review and Management (ISRM), Leadership Council and the Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO).

d. At the recommendation of the reviewers, ORD may retain an application and reconsider it during the subsequent review round.

8. AWARD CRITERIA: The Award Review Committee bases its recommendation on the following criteria:

a. The significance of the applicant's contributions to a defined field of biomedical, clinical, rehabilitation or health systems research that has led to the advancement of prevention, diagnosis or interventional/treatment strategies of conditions important to Veterans' health and aligned with VA's research priorities and mission.

b. The originality of the research.

c. Evidence of contributions to outstanding scientific innovation that have contributed to the advancement of Veterans' healthcare.

d. Evidence of substantive contribution to the future of VA Research by inspiring a new generation of investigators and has demonstrated excellence in training and mentorship of new investigators.

e. Evidence that the research has had or will have a broad impact on scientific or clinical disciplines and evidence that the nominee's VA employment and support are acknowledged consistently in the nominee's publications and presentations.

f. Evidence of outstanding scientific achievement including, but not limited to: sustained history of national peer-reviewed funding, including the applicant's current VA and non-VA funding status; publications in high quality scientific journals; invited lectures at national and international scientific meetings; evidence of sustained high-quality service and leadership to VA and Veterans in clinical and research areas; membership in and service to national and international professional organizations; editorial service to professional journals; membership on award/grant review committees; and other national and international research prizes.

9. RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Details. Each Award consists of:

a. **Personal Cash Award and Plaque.** The recipient receives a personal cash award in the amount of \$10,000 and an inscribed plaque commemorating the recipient's scientific achievements.

b. **Research Support.** The recipient receives research support in the amount of \$50,000 per year for three (3) years.

c. **Ceremony.** Each Award is presented to the recipient at an appropriate ceremony.

10. PROCEDURES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **ORD Program Directors, Scientific Program Managers (SPMs) and Scientific Merit Review Boards.**

(1) Identify highly qualified candidates and solicit applications from the Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS), or Coordinator for R&D of the appropriate VA medical facility.

(2) At the request of Award Program Manager, identify appropriate reviewers for the Award Review Committee.

b. **Research and Development Service.** The local facility R&D Service and/or Committee evaluates the merits of potential candidates for ORD Research Achievement Awards and nominates the single most outstanding candidate with MCD approval.

c. **Associate Chief of Staff, or Coordinator for R&D.** The ACOS, or Coordinator for R&D, ensures that all required application materials are submitted to ORD by the deadline specified in the submission instructions published by ORD.

d. **Medical Center Director (MCD).** The MCD, with advice from the facility's R&D

Committee and R&D Service, may support one nomination for each of the four (4) ORD Research Achievement Awards per year.

e. **Award Review Committee.**

(1) Award program manager organizes the Award Review Committee.

(2) The committee evaluates all nominations for the ORD Research Achievement Award that were received by the published deadline. Using the specified award criteria for guidance, the committee recommends the most qualified candidate for the award to the sponsoring portfolio's Executive Director.

(3) The review committee can recommend that no award be made in a specific year if no candidate meets the award criteria.

f. **Award Program Manager.**

(1) Organizes the review of the Award nominations.

(2) Prepares a request for approval of the Committee's recommended candidate by the sponsoring portfolio's Executive Director, together with a request for a monetary award of \$10,000 on VA Form 4659, Incentive Award Recommendation and Approval.

(3) In consultation with the VA Technology Transfer Program (TTP) ensures the award nominee is current with all requirements related to intellectual property. Consults with applicable stakeholders (SPMs, Million Veteran Program, Actively Managed Portfolios, and other ORD programs) to ensure compliance with reporting requirements for existing and previous VA awards.

(4) Prepares nomination of award package for review by ISRM Leadership Council and subsequent review and approval by the CRADO and USH.

(5) Upon final approval of the candidate by the Under Secretary for Health, notifies the recipient's VA medical facility of the Award and instructs the medical facility to provide the monetary award to the recipient and to request reimbursement from ORD.

(6) Orders commemorative plaques for the recipient and for the sponsoring VA medical facility.

(7) Coordinates the presentation of the award.

g. **Executive Director, Sponsoring Broad Portfolio and Director of Co-sponsoring Program.**

(1) Reviews the recommendation of the Award Review Committee; recommends approval or disapproval of the committee's recommendation to the ISRM Leadership Council; and, if approved, forwards the recommendation to the CRADO.

(2) Ensures award funding is distributed to the recipient's VA medical facility upon approval of the nomination by the Under Secretary for Health.

h. **ISRM Leadership Council.** The ISRM Leadership Council with representation from co-sponsoring programs reviews and approves Award recommendations and ensures nomination of award package is routed to CRADO.

i. **Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO).** The CRADO reviews the award recommendation approved by the ISRM Leadership Council. If the CRADO concurs with the recommendation, the CRADO signs VA Form 4659 (Recognition of High-Level Performance) and submits it for approval through the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Services, and the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, to the Under Secretary for Health. Upon approval of the nomination by the Under Secretary for Health, the CRADO notifies the recipient's Medical Center Director in writing of the Award through the Award Program Manager.

j. **VHA Awards Team.** The VHA Awards Team verifies the accuracy of the information submitted in the recommendation, ensures that all VA Awards meet the standards outlined in VA Directive 5013, and assists in coordinating the approval process.

k. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, reviews and, as appropriate, approves the nomination.

APPROVED:

Grant D. Huang, M.P.H., Ph.D.
Acting Chief Research and Development Officer