



Clinical Science Research and Development



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

CSR D Newsletter

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Miriam's Message



On April 22, a team from ORD was honored to present the 2021 John B. Barnwell Award to Louis J. Dell'Italia, MD, (pictured at left) at the Birmingham VA Medical Center.

The Barnwell Award is the Department of Veterans Affairs highest honor for clinical research and Dr. Dell'Italia is the 14th recipient of this award. After multiple attempts to schedule, each of which was thwarted by the pandemic, we were very pleased to finally be able to travel and make the award in person, in addition to making some presentations and holding a Town Hall.

As indicated in the photo below, the ORD folks who attended were Wendy, Tony, Mark, and me. It was a delightful event, attended not only by VA and academic colleagues, but by Dr.

Dell'Italia's wife, daughter, son-in-law, and two adorable granddaughters.

The ORD team appreciated the great welcome received, not only from the members of the Birmingham VAMC team but also from the attendees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Lori Davis, MD (ACOS/R&D, Tuscaloosa VAMC) was master of ceremonies for the event – in addition to being our wonderful chauffeur.

Dr. Dell'Italia's generosity of spirit was clear during his comments after receiving the award. He spoke fondly about his staff and collaborators – taking the spotlight off himself and focusing on all they contributed to his efforts.

Dr. Dell'Italia has had significant impact as a scientific leader in ground-breaking contributions to clinical management of Veterans suffering cardiovascular disease. A key impact of Dr. Dell'Italia's research is that his results have been incorporated at the national level into the American Heart Association guidelines for treatment of right ventricular myocardial infarction.

Dr. Dell'Italia is a dedicated VA physician scientist with over 32 years' service and an unwavering commitment to the VA, having served as ACOS for Research since 2010. He has been awarded VA and/or NIH research funding continuously for more than 30 years

and is the author of more than 250 research publications. In addition to his scientific accomplishments, he has mentored many VA physicians and scientists in the past and continues to do so.

He is the quintessential translational physician. His work spans targeted animal studies that investigate the cellular, biochemical, and molecular mechanisms of cardiac remodeling to translational patient-oriented research that is based on hypotheses generated in his laboratory.

Here I highlight a subset of Dr. Dell'Italia's accomplishments:

- Demonstrated that inotropic therapy and controlled volume administration were better treatment for patients with right ventricular myocardial infarction than the current therapy at the time.
- Made seminal contributions to the role of the renin-angiotensin system (RAS) in cardiac remodeling. His laboratory was the first to demonstrate the failure of RAS blockade to improve left ventricle remodeling and function in both the dog with experimentally induced mitral regurgitation and the rat with aortocaval fistula. These basic science studies reversed a paradigm regarding the belief that RAS blockade is beneficial for all forms of hemodynamic stress and cardiac remodeling.
- Conducted the first of its kind Phase IIb clinical study, which demonstrated the benefits of beta-1 receptor blockade in patients with mitral regurgitation. His findings have provided important insights into the gaps in therapeutic efficacy of RAS blockade in heart failure.
- Developed novel MRI and 3-D imaging for mitral regurgitation; this more accurate MRI uncovered severe remodeling of the heart that is unrecognized by echocardiographic left ventricular dimensional analysis.
- Identified left atrium size and function as a harbinger of left ventricular functional decline.

Dr. Dell'Italia's discoveries in each of these areas have fundamentally changed the success of management of VA patients with myocardial infarction, heart failure, and mitral regurgitation.

We in CSRD wish Dr. Dell'Italia much success in his ongoing research and mentoring activities!



From left: ORD Director of Field Operations Tony Laracuente; CSRD Acting Director Dr. Miriam Smyth; Dr. Dell'Italia; ORD Deputy Chief Research and Development Officer Dr. Wendy Tenhula; and CSRD Scientific Portfolio Manager Dr. Mark Roltsch, at the Barnwell Award Ceremony on April 22 at the Birmingham VA Medical Center .

Two Short Funding Opportunities Announced by ORD DEI

- **Support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Veterans Affairs Field Research Employees.** This opportunity is open to all VA employees who are currently affiliated with an ORD program/service including Research Services, Programs, Centers and VA investigators with current ORD-funded projects to request funds for education that will promote and support diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workforce.
 - **Budget: \$5,000**
 - **Due Date: June 30, 2022**
 - **Submission: Applications must be emailed to the VHACOORDDEIWG@va.gov mailbox with the subject line “DEI Training, Applicant Name and Station Name” by June 30, 2022.**
 - **Announcement details**
 - [DEI Education Announcement](#)

- [Budget Template for DEI Training](#)
- **Leadership Development for VA employees affiliated with an ORD Program/Service.** ORD is seeking to promote professional development opportunities and grow future leaders that reflect the diversity of the Veterans VA serves.
 - **Budget: \$10,000**
 - **Due Date: June 30, 2022**
 - **Submission: Applications must be emailed to the VHACOORDDEIWG@va.gov mailbox with the subject line “Professional Development Training, Applicant Name and Station Name” by June 30, 2022.**
 - **Announcement details**
 - [Leadership Development Announcement](#)
 - [Budget Template for Leadership Development](#)

For more information please contact: lina.kubli@va.gov

LOIs Received for Spring Funding Round

CSRD has a requirement for a Letter of Intent (LOI) to be approved prior to submitting an application that is for the Career Development Program or a Clinical Trial. The deadline (May 2, 2022) resulted in 24 LOIs for Clinical Trials. The Career Development program received 46 Letters of Intent, including 14 for BLRD and 32 for CSRD. We use the opportunity in LOI review to ensure the service direction, eligibility, and proposed science are aligned with CSRD interest and priorities. We intend to send response letters to submitting research offices no later than the week of May 30. We also encourage applicants to read the letter for important feedback, including the encouragement to contact their specific program officer in advance of application submission.

Call for Articles is Shared

The [Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health \(JMVFH\)](#) is seeking articles that describe approaches to prevent, mitigate, and treat moral injury among military members, Veterans, and their families for publication in an April 2023 special edition. ***Perspectives on healing and repairing moral injury*** will highlight emerging research, innovative approaches, perspectives, challenges, trends, and future directions in the conceptualization, prevention, assessment, and management/treatment of moral injury for this population.

Drs. Brett Litz and Anthony Nazarov are Guest Editors of this special edition. Statements of intent are due June 13, 2022, and initial manuscripts are due July 15, 2022. Details can be found here: <https://jmvfh.utpjournals.press/resources/call-for-articles>.

Interested in Joining the CSRD DMC?

The CSRD Data Monitoring Committee (DMC), that provides data and safety monitoring for CSRD funded projects, is seeking new members. For more information, please contact DMC Manager Tamara Paine, DBA. (Tamara.Paine@va.gov).

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