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Clinical Science Research and Development



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

Terri Talks

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CSRD Staff Highlight: Dr. Terri Gleason



Terri Gleason has dedicated much of her professional career to advancing VA Research in order to make fundamental improvements in understanding and treating Veterans. Trained as a neuropsychologist, Dr. Gleason has brought a strong influence of behavioral and cognitive research to ORD. She remembers when PTSD research in VA was barely recognized, and now sees extraordinary scientific growth and contributions in this Veteran-centric strategic priority: [Accelerating Development of Better PTSD Treatment for Veterans: The VA PTSD Psychopharmacology Initiative \(PPI\)](#).

As one of eight children, Terri naturally brings teamwork and collaboration to VA Research, and finds continuous joy in connecting with the wider community of CSRD scientists to advance our mission through collaboration.

CSRD Announces 2021 Barnwell Awardee: Dr. Louis Dell'Italia

We are proud to announce the 2021 John B. Barnwell Award winner is Dr. Louis J. Dell'Italia from the Birmingham VA. The Barnwell Award 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.



Dr. Dell'Italia's scientific leadership and his commitment to improving health care for Veterans are clearly reflected in his outcomes based clinical trials that have changed clinical practice for millions of patients. His dedication and service to the VA is apparent by his role of Associate Chief of Staff for Research for over 12 years. He has seven top 10 Teaching Excellence Awards in the Departments of Medicine of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and for the UAB Dean's Mentorship Award. Dr. Dell'Italia is a dedicated VA physician scientist with over 32 years of service. Dr. Dell'Italia began his VA career as a physician in San Antonio. In 1989 he joined the staff of Birmingham VAMC. His research contributions to clinical science has been focused in three areas: right ventricle, mitral regurgitation, and the renin angiotensin chymase system. In each area he has pursued novel approaches that has had significant clinical impact.

Dr. Dell'Italia wrote a Viewpoint in *Circulation Research* entitled the "Impact of VA Research on Health Care for All: Contributions over Nine Decades and Counting" (Circ Res 121(1):16-18, 2017).

Dr. Dell'Italia brings honor to the John B. Barnwell Award. He is an exemplary clinician scientist whose career and scientific contributions embody both the letter and the spirit of the award.

Just a reminder: the 2022 Applications are due COB February 1, 2022, for outstanding VA clinical scientists.

Nominations may come for the VA medical center or CSR&D can invite researchers to submit an application. **All applicants must apply through their 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: mark.roltsch@va.gov

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>

BLRD and CSRD Career Development Symposium is set

The 2021 Career Development Awardee Symposium will be held Monday, September 13, through Wednesday, September 15. The meeting will be virtual again this year and includes all BL and CS first- and third-year awardees. We thank these individuals, their mentors, and their respective research facilities for supporting them during this award which allows protected research time.

Monday and Tuesday will consist of 4-5 hours of programming beginning at 11 am Eastern / 8 am Pacific and concluding with a virtual networking/social hour. Wednesday will be limited to meetings between BL/CS Scientific Portfolio Managers and the CDA awardees doing work in their topic areas (one meeting per portfolio). Questions should be directed to mark.roltsch@va.gov.

Spring 2021 Funded Projects Announced

We are excited to announce the Spring 2021 projects were released in Just-In-Time (JIT) to research offices on Tuesday, August 17, 2021. Congratulations to the following 30 awardees for their successful applications:

- ABRAM, SAMANTHA, PHD., San Francisco, “An EEG Study of Reward Processing and Memory Dysfunction in Schizophrenia”
- BARRETT, TERRENCE A, MD., Lexington, “Modulation of mitochondrial respiration to treat colitis”
- BRITTON, PETER C, PHD., Canandaigua, “Motivational Interviewing to Address Suicidal Ideation: A Randomized Controlled Trial with Suicidal Veterans”
- CHANG, HAO, PHD., Madison, “Planar Cell Polarity Control in Melanoma Metastasis”
- CHANG, JOHN T, MD., San Diego, “T cell subsets in inflammatory bowel disease”
- CHATTERJEE, SAURABH, PHD., Columbia, “Microbiome targeted oral butyrate therapy in Gulf War multisymptom illness”
- FEELEY, BRIAN, MD., San Francisco, “Endogenous stem cells promote regeneration of muscle in rotator cuff repair”
- FONDA, JENNIFER R., PhD., Boston (incl Brockton), “Predictor Profiles of Opioid Use Disorders and Overdose Among Post-9/11 Veterans”
- FORD, JUDITH M, PHD., San Francisco, “Neural and cognitive consequences of COVID-19 survival”
- FRIEND, SAMANTHA F, MD, PHD., San Diego, “Peripheral and central nervous system inflammation associated with military sexual trauma and PTSD”
- GARDNER, RAQUEL C, MD., San Francisco, “Transforming Research and Clinical Knowledge in Older Veterans with Acute Traumatic Brain Injury (TRACK-VA)”
- GREGG, LUCILE PARKER, MD., Houston, “Association of diuretics with change in extracellular volume, natriuretic peptides, symptoms, and cardiovascular outcomes in CKD”
- HOUTSMA, CLAIRE, PHD., New Orleans, “Acceptability and Feasibility of a Peer-to-Peer Firearm-Specific Means Safety Intervention”
- HUANG, FRANKLIN W, MD, PHD., San Francisco, “Investigating the mechanisms of aggressive prostate cancer in African American Veterans”
- JANI, ALKESH HARIHAR, MD., Denver, “Impaired B Cell and Vaccine Responses with Advance Renal Disease”

- JIANG, WEI, MD., Charleston, “Investigate the mechanism of autoreactive B cell-mediated immunological failure despite virologic suppression in HIV-infected individuals on antiretroviral therapy”
- KARANDIKAR, NITIN J, MD, PHD., Iowa City, “Effector-Regulator Immune Interactions During Autoimmune Demyelinating Disease”
- KELLY, JOHN DANIEL, MD., San Francisco, “Vaccine failure: natural history and determinants of post-vaccination Covid-19”
- KESHAMOUNI, VENKATESHWAR G, PHD., Ann Arbor, “Immune surveillance of Lung Cancer by Natural Killer Cells”
- MACLEAN, ROBERT ROSS, PHD., West Haven, “An adaptive walking intervention to manage chronic pain in veterans with opioid use disorder engaged in opioid agonist treatment”
- MANRIQUE ACEVEDO, CAMILA MARGARITA, MD., Columbia, “Targeting the Endothelial Glycocalyx to Enhance Vascular Function and Exercise-Induced Vascular Adaptations in Type 2 Diabetes”
- MCRAE-CLARK, AIMEE L, DOTH (PHARMD)., Charleston, “Varenicline for Comorbid Tobacco and Cannabis Use in Veterans”
- ORMSETH, MICHELLE JANE, MD., Nashville (incl Murfreesboro), “Small RNAs and risk of rheumatoid arthritis”
- SALAT, DAVID H, PHD., Boston (incl Brockton), “Impact of Combat Exposure on Structural and Functional Brain Connectivity and Risk for Alzheimers Disease in Aging Veterans”
- SCUMPIA, PHILIP, MD, PHD., Greater Los Angeles (incl Sepulveda), “Machine Learning and Reflectance Confocal Microscopy for Biopsy-free Virtual Histology of Squamous Skin Neoplasms”
- SIBLEY, SHALAMAR D., MD., Minneapolis, “Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS) with Cognitive Training to Reduce Impulsivity and Weight in Veterans with Obesity: A Clinical Trial”
- THOMPSON-HOLLANDS, JOHANNA, PHD., Boston (incl Brockton), “Family Involvement in Treatment for PTSD (FIT-PTSD): A Brief, Feasible Method for Enhancing Outcomes, Retention, and Engagement”
- WALKER, RUTH HELEN, MB, DOTH (CHB), PHD., Bronx, “Clinical and Neuropathological Characterization of Parkinsonism Related to TBI in Veterans (CANPARK-TBI)”
- WALLACE, BETH ILENE, MD., Ann Arbor, “Using SMART Design to Develop Dynamic Treatment Regimens for Glucocorticoid Tapering”
- WU, GREGORY, MD, PHD., St. Louis, “Role of CSF microglia in health and disease”

Research and development offices for primary and secondary sites are encouraged to start working with PIs, as soon as possible, to upload necessary documents into JIT, in order to satisfy all requirements to be cleared for funding within the 180-day deadline.

Updated BL/CS Program Guide Available

The Program Guide for the Biomedical Laboratory and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Merit Review Award Program has been updated and is available at [Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development \(BLR&D\) and Clinical Science Research and Development \(CSR&D\) Services Merit Review Award Program](#).

The Program Guide establishes procedures for the submission, review, and acceptance of the Merit Review Award Program for BL and CS. It describes the program and includes guidance and instructions for applications.

The Merit Review Award Program is an intramural funding mechanism to support investigator-initiated research conducted by eligible VA investigators at VA medical centers or VA-approved sites. This program is the principal mechanism for BL and CS for funding basic, preclinical biomedical and behavioral studies as well clinical studies of disorders and diseases of importance to the health of Veterans. Is the goal of BL and CS to fund only applications that propose research is scientifically meritorious and relevant to the health of Veterans.

For additional information regarding the updated Program Guide, contact Merit Review Program Manager Mike Burgio (Michael.Burgio@va.gov).

Transition to Cerner EHR: What CSRD Investigators should be doing now

After the VA Strategic Review of the Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) program from March-June and Congressional hearings in July, VA leadership is working this summer to determine next steps for the transition. We encourage our investigators to start getting familiar now with certain aspects to better understand potential impacts. These helpful hints are provided by Maria Souden and her team leading the research transition. Dr. Souden is National Chair, EHR Modernization Research Sub-Council; PI, ORD Strategic Initiative for Research & EFR Synergy (OSIRES); and Director, VA Information Resource Center.

What can CSRD investigators do now to prepare for the transition to CERNER?

- Periodically check [Research & EHRM SharePoint](#) for deployment schedule updates
- Become familiar with [Cerner PowerTrials solution](#)
- Take advantage of available learning opportunities
- Set up a [Cerner account](#) for access to their resources
- Look for guidance in the coming months for recommendations to protocols, consents, HIPAA authorization forms
 - For example, revise protocols from “CPRS” to “the VA electronic health record”

With thanks to Dr. Souden and the entire research focused transition team!

Policy Change: Calling Research Subjects

The acting Under Secretary of Health (USH) signed a policy memorandum on June 29, 2021 allowing for the proactive calling of VA subjects for recruitment **only within the parameters that ORD establishes for an ORD approval process.**

Questions should be sent to VHACOORDRegulatory@va.gov. Please put "Proactive Calling" as the subject line.

Also, the ORD SharePoint for Proactive Calling is expected to be operational within the next two weeks.

Coming Soon!

CSRD will soon be announcing an opportunity for VA investigators to request support for the collection of biospecimens in CSRD-funded clinical trials. This program will be made available as a supplement to ongoing or newly funded trials. Expect to hear more in mid-September.

HSS Job Opportunity to Close

CSRD has an opportunity for a great candidate to join our team as a Health Science Specialist to conduct portfolio/data management for our Service. Please see the links included below for more details.

Please find the DEU link (for general public applicants) on USA Jobs:

<https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/612057400>. This announcement will **close on August 31.**

Please find the Merit link for competitive service applicants on USA Jobs:

<https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/611025700>. This announcement will **close on August 30.**

DMC Seeking Members

CSRD's Centralized Data Monitoring Committee (DMC) is currently seeking members for two panels – Medical/Surgical (M/S) and Psychiatric, Behavioral Health and Neurologic Disorders (PBN). The DMC is an independent multidisciplinary group that provides ongoing oversight and monitoring of funded studies focusing on safety and feasibility, participant accrual and retention, adverse events monitoring, and data analyses. Qualifications for membership include funding history and clinical trial experience, academic position of associate professor or above, a solid publications record, and review experience. Members are needed from the following areas: cardiology, pulmonology, oncology, urology, neurology, internal medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and biostatistics. For more information, please contact Dr. Tamara Paine (Tamara.Paine@va.gov).

CSRD Contact Information

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