



# The Centennial Anniversary of VA Research

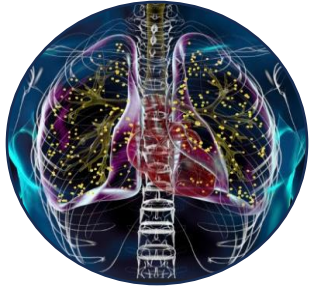
*Lori Davis, M.D.*

*Office of Research and Development  
Veterans Health Administration*

*For 100 years,  
VA Research has  
been improving  
the lives of  
Veterans and all  
Americans  
through  
biomedical  
discovery and  
translation.*



# VA Research: 100 Years of Achievement\*



**1946**

First Clinical Trial  
for Tuberculosis



**1967**

First Successful  
Liver Transplant



**1990**

Discovery of a  
Hormone That Led to  
GLP-1 Diabetes Drugs



**1960**

First Permanent  
Cardiac Pacemaker  
Implantation



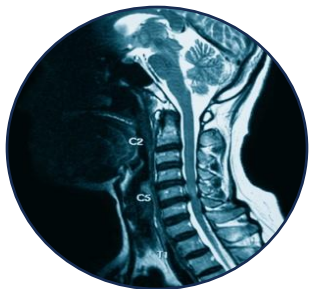
**1983**

Aspirin Showed to  
Reduce Heart  
Attacks



**2011**

Invented the  
Shingles Vaccine



**1966**

Developed the CT  
Scan



**1984**

Development of  
the Nicotine Patch



**2023**

One Millionth Veteran  
Enrolled in Million  
Veteran Program



# VA Research Poster Exhibition (excerpt)\*

## OUR ORIGINS

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR DISCOVERY

*"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."*  
— President Lincoln, 1862

**1921** President Harding forms the Veterans Bureau.

**1925** Research and Medical Care Begins.

**1930-1933** Medical care and research are consolidated when the Veterans Bureau forms a hospital-based investigation and research program. Dr. Philip Wang's 1930 monograph, "A named first research director."

**1946** The Landon Act (Public Law 84) grants the Veterans Bureau oversight of all public health hospitals and Congress provides \$10 million for new construction. By 1955 the Bureau manages 50 hospitals.

**1955-1958** The Veterans Administration becomes a Federal Agency.

**1991** The Veterans Health Administration is born.

President Bush signs Public Law 103-431, renaming the Veterans Health Service and Research Administration to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). VHA manages a national network of medical centers, each of them also supporting a robust research program.

**VA Research Priorities**

- Make clinical trials more accessible, nationwide.
- Put the value of data to work for Veterans.
- Get discoveries and advances to Veterans faster.

VA Research Program Sites	Actively Funded Researchers	Actively Funded Research Projects	Total Research Budget (VA and non-VA Sources)	Published Articles by VA Researchers
106	3,774	7,431	\$983M	\$2.4B

*Source: VA Research & Statistics*

## OUR EXPERTS

PIONEERING 100 YEARS OF MEDICAL PROGRESS

VA Research attracts the best, the brightest, and those who are at the forefront of groundbreaking medical advancement. Throughout the last century, several VA researchers and scientists received worldwide awards and recognition and the highest honors in their field.

**1962** **Dr. Michael DeBakey | Lasker Award**  
Houston VA  
Established new techniques in cardiac vascular surgery, developed the Ventricular Assist Device that supplies pump support for a failing heart, and assisted in the establishment of the VA.

**1971** **Dr. Edward Freis | Lasker Award**  
Washington, D.C. VA  
Performed groundbreaking research that changed how hypertension, or high blood pressure, is treated.

**1974** **Dr. Ludwik Gross | Lasker Award**  
Bronx VA  
Discovered the first two cancer viruses in mammals and demonstrated that leukemia is transmitted by a virus.

**1975** **Dr. William Oldendorf | Lasker Award**  
West Los Angeles VA  
Pioneered the development of medical imaging techniques such as the CAT scan.

**1977** **Dr. Rosalyn Yalow | Lasker Award & Nobel Prize**  
Bronx VA  
Performed groundbreaking work developing a scientific technique called radioimmunoassay, which uncovered the mechanisms of insulin injections in the body.

**1977** **Dr. Andrew Schally | Nobel Prize**  
New Orleans and Miami VA  
Called the father of modern endocrinology, he discovered that the hypothalamus linked the nervous system to the endocrine system through the pituitary gland.

**1977** **Dr. Ferid Murad | Lasker Award & Nobel Prize**  
Palo Alto VA  
Discovered that nitroglycerin released nitric oxide, a body chemical, that helps maintain healthy blood vessels.

**1996-1998** **Dr. Thomas Starzl | Lasker Award**  
Denver VA  
Performed the first successful liver transplant and refined the use of immunosuppressive drugs to avoid organ rejection.

**2012** **Dr. Rory Cooper | National Medal**  
Pittsburgh VA  
Inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame for his innovations in mobility technology.

**2023**

Key:  
• Nobel Prize: Global distinction of individuals who have conferred the greatest benefit on humankind in their field.  
• Lasker Award: A prestigious global research award recognizing significant contributions to human health.  
• National Medal of Technology & Innovation: The highest honor in the United States for technological achievement.

## OUR SUCCESSES

TRANSFORMING MEDICINE. MAKING HISTORY

VA Research translates innovations from the lab to real-world applications, driving improvements in care and ensuring every discovery makes a meaningful impact. For 100 years, VA Research has revolutionized medicine worldwide.

**1946** **First clinical trial for tuberculosis begins**  
Dr. John Barnwell and Dr. Arthur M. Walke

**1960** **First successful permanent cardiac pacemaker implantation**  
Dr. William Chardack, Dr. Andrew Gage and Wilson Greatbach, Buffalo VA

**1961** **Developed the CT scan**  
Dr. William Oldendorf, West Los Angeles VA

**1966** **Developed grading system for prostate cancer**  
Dr. Donald Gleason, Minneapolis VA

**1967** **First successful liver transplant**  
Dr. Thomas Starzl, Denver VA

**1983** **Protective Effects of Aspirin Shown: "Take Two Aspirin and Call me in the Morning"**  
Dr. H. Daniel Lewis Jr., Kansas City VA

**1984** **Developed the nicotine patch**  
Dr. Jed Rose, West Los Angeles VA

**1990** **Discovered a hormone that led to the development of GLP-1 diabetes drugs**  
Dr. John Eng and Dr. Jean-Pierre Raufman, Bronx and Baltimore VA

**2003** **Identified link between ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) and military service**  
Dr. Ronnie Homer, Durham VA

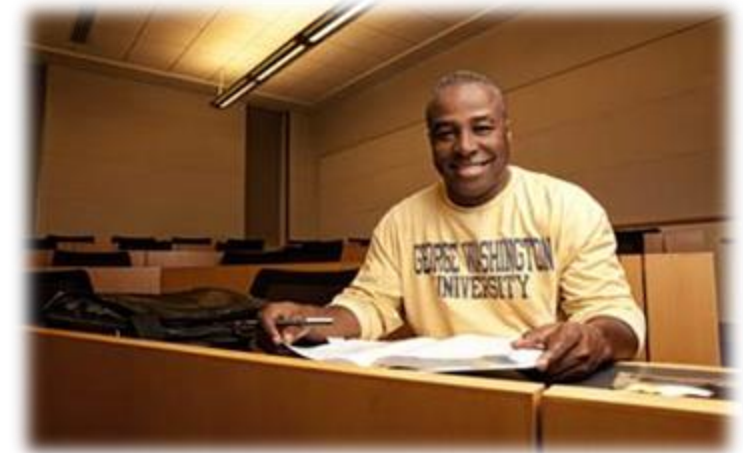
**2019** **Invented device for shared ventilator use**  
Dr. Kyle Vankoeveering, Ann Arbor, VA

**2023** **Enrolled the one millionth Veteran in VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP), one of the largest research programs in the world studying genes and health with the largest genetic database tied to health care system**

There is more to our story. Explore it here.

# VA Research in the Nation

- Largest integrated health care system in the nation
- >9 Million Veterans in care
- >300K clinical employees
- >1,200 medical facilities (>170 hospitals)
- Advanced electronic health record
- Academic affiliate network
- Intramural research program dedicated to Veterans' needs
- Veterans participate in research done at VA researchers
- Integrated system: social, educational, housing and disability services
- VA Research's national QI program (QUERI) ensures effective practices are more rapidly translated to Veterans





# Active Research Projects by Location (All Funding Sources) in 2024



# ORD Organizational Structure to Support the VA Research Enterprise

L1

Chief Research and  
Development Officer  
CRADO



Grant Huang (Acting)

L2

Strategic Priorities,  
Outcomes, and  
Communications



Marc Wynne  
Deputy CRADO

Investigators,  
Scientific Review,  
and Management



Amy Kilbourne  
Deputy CRADO  
(Acting)

Enterprise  
Optimization



Suma Muralidhar  
Deputy CRADO  
(Acting)

Enterprise  
Protections,  
Regulatory Outreach



Jon White  
Deputy CRADO  
(Acting)

Finance



Matt Verna  
Chief, Fiscal Officer

Operations and  
Workplace Culture



Wendy Tenhula  
Deputy CRADO

# Impactful Veteran healthcare research and clinical operations can only be successful through communication, coordination, and collaboration



RESEARCH

*Research is designed to meet Veteran health care needs*



VETERANS

*Veterans participate in clinical trials to validate and further research*



CLINICAL  
OPERATIONS

*Clinical Operations are innovated and transformed by research*

**Together creating the leading Veteran healthcare system through informed clinical operations and a holistic research enterprise**



# VA Research Funding – FY2024



**Congressional  
Appropriations for VA  
Medical and Prosthetics  
Research**

**\$ 943M**



**Total Research Budget  
(VA and non-VA Sources)**

**\$ 2.4B**



# VA Research by the Numbers – FY2024



**Active VA Research  
Sites Nationwide**

**102**



**Active VA Funded  
Researchers**

**3,685**



**Active Funded  
Research Projects\***

**7,278**

\* Includes projects funded by  
VA and non-VA sources.



**Published Articles by  
VA Researchers\***

**11,732**

\* All funding sources.



**Choose VA**

**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# VA Research – Into the Future

**Building on a tradition of innovation, VA Research is charting the future for Veteran care addressing the Secretary's priorities, and Veteran's most pressing health needs such as:**

## Research Focus

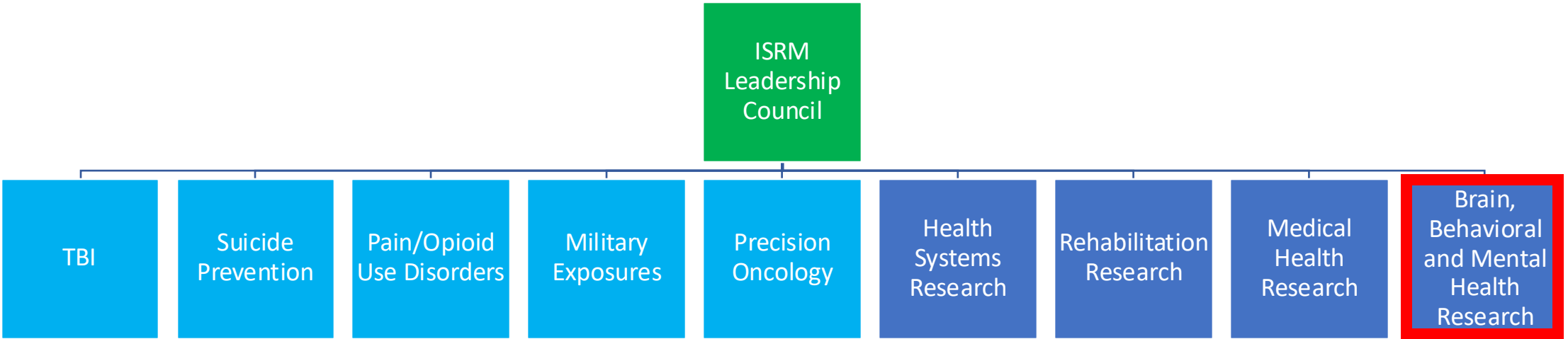
- Precision Oncology
- Suicide Prevention
- Military Exposures
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Pain and Opioid Abuse
- Women Veteran Health
- Homelessness

## Cutting Edge Approaches

- Genomics & Precision Medicine
- Diagnostic Technologies
- Data Science
- Artificial Intelligence



# ORD Investigators, Scientific Review and Management (ISRM)



**Actively Managed Portfolios**  
Focused purviews

**Broad Portfolios**  
Broad purviews, CDAs, RCSs

ISRM funds VA-employed investigators to conduct preclinical, clinical, rehabilitation and health systems research projects that address Veteran priorities and needs.

# Brain, Behavioral, Mental Health (BBMH) Mission

To improve Veterans' health and well-being by funding, managing, and advancing science where brain, behavioral and mental health are the areas of focus.



**The BBMH** Broad Portfolio supports Veteran-centric research, spanning the entire translational research continuum, from foundational science to the development and testing of actionable health-related interventions.

# Partnered Research Program Supports VA Participation in Industry Trials

- Connect interested companies with VA clinical and scientific experts to assess viability of specific projects
- Provide information and resources to stakeholders related to partnering with VA on multisite clinical trials
- Facilitate centrally executed Confidentiality Disclosure Agreements (CDAs)
- Facilitate Master Agreements (e.g., Master CDAs and Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA))
- Collaborate with others in VA, VHA and ORD to identify challenges and best practices and, when appropriate, offer solutions (e.g., minimize inaction and bottlenecks)



# ISRM Research Priorities Reflect ORD, VA & Congressional Priorities from Bench to Veteran

ISRM research priorities across the translational spectrum (pre-clinical, clinical, rehabilitation, health care) are based on VA statutory mandates (e.g., [38 U.S. Code 7303](#), Cleland Dole Act-[Public Law No. 117-328](#)), Legislative mandates (below), ORD current [strategic priorities](#), and the VA Secretary's [priorities](#) (strategic drivers):

## 1. Legislative mandates (especially those aligned with ISRM Actively Managed portfolios)

- Hannon Act (e.g., TBI, Suicide Prevention)
- PACT Act (including Gulf War and Military Exposures programs)
- CARA Act (Pain/Opioid)
- Cleland Dole Act (Precision Oncology)
- MISSION Act (Community Care, Rural health)
- Elizabeth Dole Act (Caregiving, Value-based care models)

## 2. Timely Access –Any Door (Supports Direct Care, Community Care, Digital Health-AI, Virtual Support, etc.)

# VA Research → Veteran Care through Leveraged Investments

**ORD supports several research enterprise resources that provide greater ability to improve Veteran lives through research.**

- Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) → National clinical trials / Real world evidence
- Million Veteran Program (MVP) → Genomic / Precision health research
- Veterans Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI) → Electronic Health Record / “Big Data”
- Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) → Evidence evaluation / Implementation into practice

National network of research centers in health systems, rehabilitation, Veteran recruitment / engagement

# Million Veteran Program (MVP)

The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is one of the world's largest research programs on genes, lifestyle, military experience and exposures, and health driving the most advanced precision health care for Veterans from all backgrounds.

- MVP reached 1 million enrolled Veterans in November 2023. As of April 2025, there are over 1,070,000 Veterans enrolled.
- MVP is facilitating high quality research across a range of areas, e.g.:
  - PTSD and other mental health conditions
  - Cancers
  - Military exposures
  - Diabetes
  - Cardiovascular disease
  - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
  - Alzheimer's Disease
- MVP research has resulted in over 400 scientific publications in high-impact journals.



90%

Male



10%

Female



80K+ (or 8%)

Hispanic

180K+ (or 18% Black)

MVP has the largest cohort of people of African ancestry of any research program in the world

25% from racial minorities  
represented in the program



# ORD Homelessness Consortium of Research

## **Supporting Employment & Resources for Veterans' Economic Security (SERVES):**

- VA community of researchers and program partners including VBA, HPO, & Veterans Justice Outreach, focused on Veteran employment & economic security
- National data for research & evaluation of programs and policies (e.g., national evaluation of HUD-VASH program)
- Expand VA's adoption of scientifically supported employment services and Veterans' access to related evidence-based programs
- Research & evaluation to reduce the negative reciprocal impacts between Veteran unemployment/economic insecurity and medical/psychosocial conditions

## Suicide Prevention Research Impact NeTwork (SPRINT)

- National resource to accelerate VA suicide prevention research to improve care and prevent Veteran suicide
- Engagement – inclusion of community partners, family, friends, peers and social networks, Veterans
- Precision Medicine - predictive analytics; understanding risk fluctuations over time; matching specific treatments to level of risk; development of precision medicine models and tools that incorporate personal characteristics and/or social determinants of health

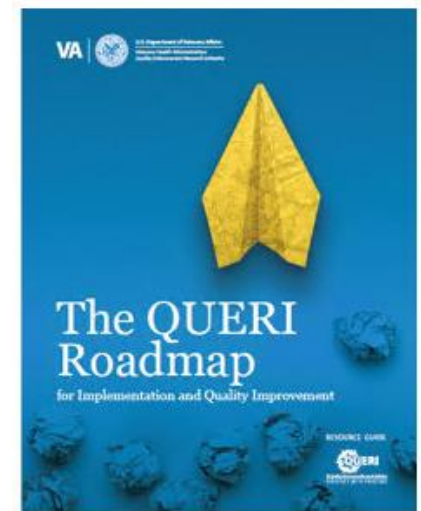
Future efforts seek to further enhance following models applied to precision oncology and trials networks.

# QUERI is an ORD Program that Bridges the Research-Clinical Divide

- Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) was established in 1998 to improve Veteran health by supporting effective treatment uptake in routine care
- QUERI is funded by clinical (vs. research) dollars, which is critical to bridging the research-clinical transition.
- QUERI funds >200 VA-employed scientists from 50+ centers across the US to partner with VA providers, leaders, and Veterans to implement effective treatments nationally.
- Since 2015, QUERI has implemented over 100 effective treatments, serving over 5.7 million Veterans nationally

In the U.S., only 20% of effective treatments reach patients in routine care, and it can take 17 years to do so, on average.

QUERI is VA's program to help reduce this research-to-practice gap.





# ISRM Research Priorities Reflect ORD, VA & Congressional Priorities from Bench to Veteran (Continued)

## 3. Well-Being of the Veterans at the Center of the Enterprise through:

- Health= Mental/Physical/Spiritual Approaches across the enterprise to ensure veterans get choice (e.g., chronic disease- prevention, treatment, and management\*)
- Housing and Social Aspects (Homelessness)
- Economic/Vocational/Educational

## 4. Relevant SecVA Topics aligned with ORD priorities: Suicide Prevention, Homelessness

\*In VA research, chronic disease is defined as a service-connected condition or a condition that is disproportionately experienced by the Veteran population that lasts one year or more, requires ongoing medical attention, and limits functioning or quality of life or leads to premature mortality (References: <https://vaclaimsinsider.com/va-presumptive-list/#va-presumptive-list-2024-10-main-categories-for-presumptive-service-connection> and <https://vaclaimsinsider.com/va-presumptive-list/#2-chronic-debilitating-diseases>)

# ISRM Application Process: Key Steps

Go to: <https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm>

(VA network access only)

1. Identify Notice of Special interest (NOSI) the application is most responsive to
2. Choose appropriate Request for Application (RFA: IIR, CDA) the NOSI accepts
3. Select study section/Scientific Review Group-SRG:  
<https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/docs/isrm/ISRM-SRG-Purviews-and-Review-Cycles.pdf>
4. Determine your due dates and ID appropriate RFA pre-application
5. Contact SRG point of contact with any questions

- All RFAs are cross-portfolio. The RFAs define the Award Type, Budget, Duration, Review Criteria, etc.
- Broad Portfolios (BPs), Actively Managed Portfolios (AMPS), and Programs publish their own NOSIs which define specific research topics of interest
- Each NOSI lists the cross-portfolio RFAs that can be applied to through that NOSI.
- The Scientific Review Groups (SRGs) have not changed. They convene on the same schedule. Purview statements have been combined into a single document with minor tweaks.

# Additional Information

## Links to recent webinars:

- AMP Panel & and Application review process (12/4/24) - [Video and PDF](#)
- Application Review Process Updates (12/9/24)- [Video and PDF](#)

## List of all RFAs and NOSIs:

<https://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/rfa.cfm>

(VA network access only)

# Research Week 2025

Thank you!

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