VA Research Overview:
Office of Research and Development
Investigators, Scientific Review and Management

Investigators, Scientific Review and Management (ISRM)
Office of Research and Development (ORD)
Veterans Health Administration
Updated May 19, 2026

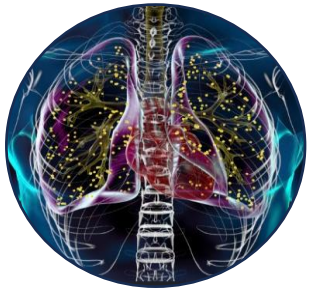
VHA Office of Research and Development (ORD)

ORD leads a large research enterprise that serves Veterans by:

- Executing the Medical and Prosthetics Research appropriation;
- Providing central policies for the safe and ethical conduct of research;
- Supporting over 100 VA medical centers doing a range of scientific work;
- Fulfilling a mission aimed at enhancing the care and well-being of Veterans through rigorous evidence-based approaches.

For over 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

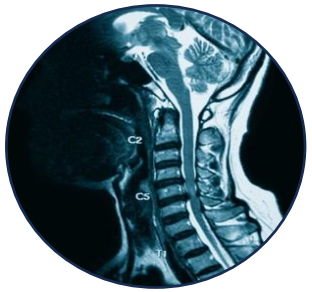
1967
First Successful Liver Transplant

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
Demonstrated Effectiveness of Shingles Vaccine



1966
Developed the CT Scan

1984
Development of the Nicotine Patch

2023
One Millionth Veteran Enrolled in Million Veteran Program

* These nine examples represent only a subset of the achievements of VA Research.

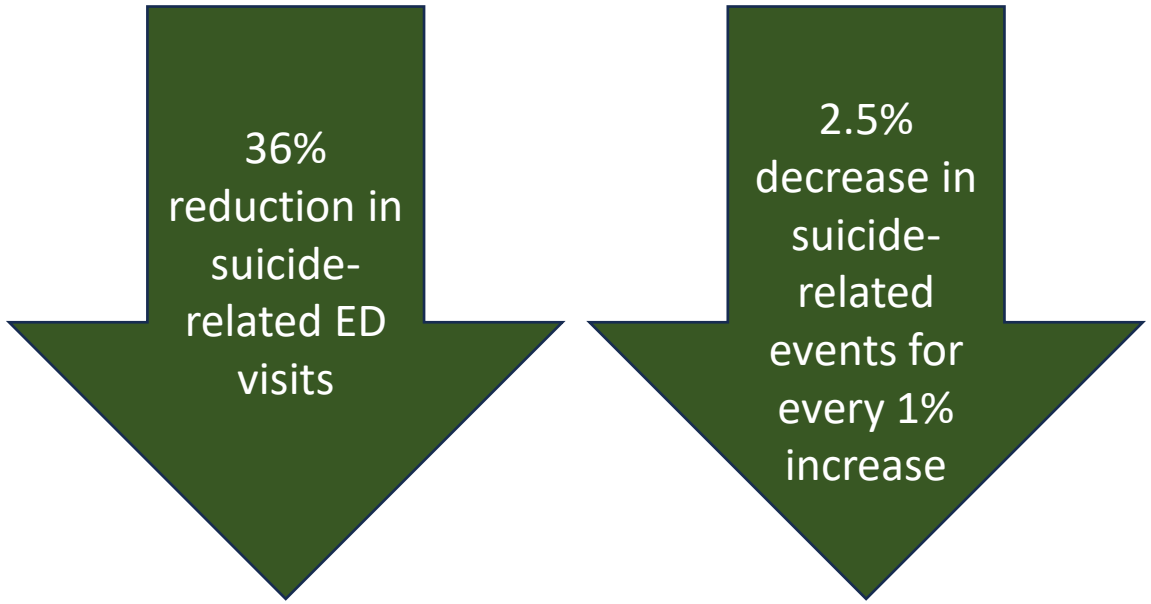
VA National PTSD Brain Bank and VA National Center for PTSD

- The first single-cell analysis of postmortem brain tissue from military Veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Comparing brain tissue from Veterans with PTSD to tissue from brains without PTSD, the West Haven VA National Center for PTSD Clinical Neuroscience Division investigators identified differences across neurons, microglia, blood vessels and more in the prefrontal cortex.
- Molecular map to see how PTSD reshapes the cellular landscape, altering signaling pathways, inflammatory responses and cellular function.

- generosity of the families of the decedents who donated the brain tissue used in these studies. We thank the National Center for PTSD Brain Bank, the University of Pittsburgh Brain Tissue Donation Program and the NIH NeuroBioBank whose efforts led to the donation of the post-mortem tissue used in these studies; the Keck Microarray Shared Resource (KMSR) and YCGA at Yale university for their assistance with snRNA-seq, snATAC-seq and snMultiome-seq; and the assistance of the Molecular Genomics Core at Duke University School of Medicine for the generation of the spatial transcriptomic data for the paper. The research reported here was supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Health Administration, VISN1 Career Development Award, a Brain and Behavior Research Foundation Young Investigator Award, an American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Young Investigator Award and NIH grants R01AA031017 and DP1DA060811 to M.J.G. and R01NS128523 and R01HG012572 to J.Z. This work was supported with resources and the use of facilities at the VA Connecticut Health Care System, the Durham VA Healthcare System, the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, the VA Boston Healthcare System and the National Center for PTSD, US Department of Veterans Affairs. This work was funded in part by the State of Connecticut, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

VA Research: Impacts on Veteran Behavioral Health

Virtual Access to Mental Health Services



Veteran Access to Pain & Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Treatments

Consortium to Disseminate and Understand Implementation of Opioid Use Disorder Treatment (CONDUIT)

- **>1900** Providers trained
- **>60 VAMCs** 6 EBPs for Pain

Clinical Impacts

- **Increased Veteran access to evidence-based pain treatments**
- **267% increase** in # of Veterans receiving OUD treatment

VA Research – Focused on Veteran Needs

Building on a tradition of innovation, VA Research is charting the future for Veteran care addressing VA 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 & Management (ISRM)

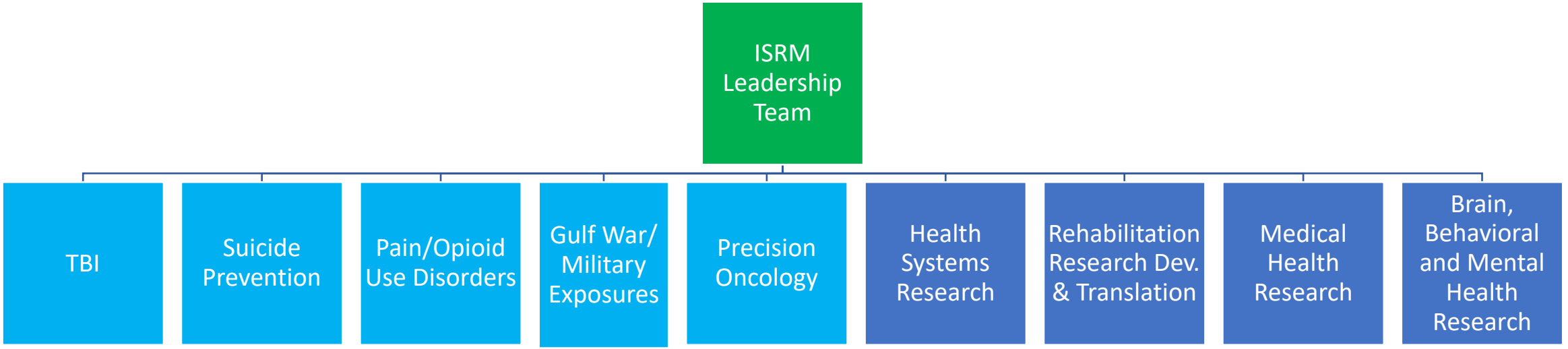
ISRM funds VA-employed investigators to conduct preclinical, clinical, rehabilitation and health systems research projects that address Veteran priorities and needs.

For over 80 years, VA has supported investigator-initiated research through formal affiliations between VA Medical Centers and Universities (e.g., Medical Schools), ensuring Veteran access to highly-trained clinician-scientists focused on research addressing their needs (VA Policy Memorandum 2, January 30, 1946)

ISRM Overview

- ISRM shared services, cross-portfolio RFAs, single funding source
  - More visible alignment of VA Research goals with VA priorities
  - Streamlined investigator application process
  - Greater ACOS agency over funding
- Current status: >2000 applications per year, funding ~350-400
  - ~40% projects involve pre-clinical/animal models
  - ~20% funding rate across portfolios
  - ~25% triage rate (NIH current triage rate ~70%)
- Looking ahead:
  - ISRM-wide priorities: AI, Veteran economic security, Chronic disease
  - Innovations in methods, technology, and partnerships
  - Building capacity for cross-disciplinary, Veteran-focused research

ORD Investigators, Scientific Review and Management (ISRM)



Actively Managed Portfolios (AMP)

Focused purviews and impacts

Broad Portfolios

Broad purviews, Capacity-building

ISRM Operations: Business Management, Information Analytics, Clinical Trials, Scientific Review Support

ISRM funds VA-employed investigators to conduct research projects across the translation spectrum that address VA and Veteran priorities and needs. VA investigators can apply to different portfolios using the same RFA mechanisms.

ISRM receives >2000 applications per year, funding rate ~20%

ORD ISRM Research Priorities

Improve Veteran health through embedded translational research in real-world settings focused on….

Statutory mandates (e.g., 38 U.S. Code 7303, Cleland Dole Act- Public Law No. 117-328), Legislative mandates (below), ORD current strategic priorities, SecVA strategic drivers:

1. **Legislative mandates**
   - 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)**
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: Suicide Prevention, Homelessness**

Examples of Impacts on Veteran Health from ISRM-funded Research

Bench to Veteran:

- >85 prosthetic and rehabilitation technologies transitioned into clinical use
- Bone-Anchored prosthetic for lower-limb amputees

Informing treatment and program development for Veterans:

- Deep-dive data: Total Brain Diagnostics, VA-SHIELD
- AI models to predict Veteran housing instability, suicide risk, etc.

Veteran access and health care value:

- >200,000 Veterans virtual care access → 36% reduction in suicide-related ED visit
- >680,000 lung cancer screenings for >350,000 Veterans since 2021

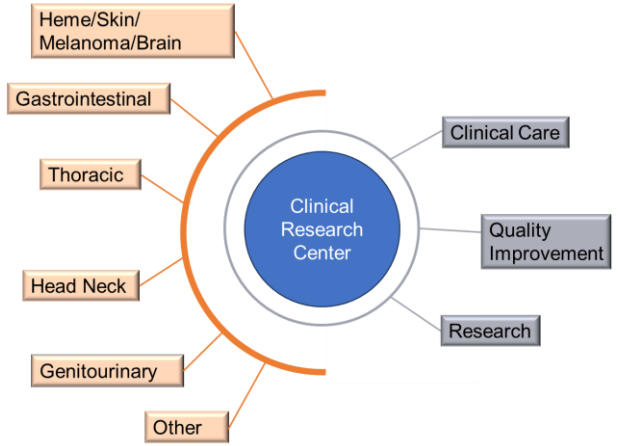
Policy change:

- Cost Implications of Veterans' VHA-Medicare Advantage Dual Enrollment—Legislation fix
- Formal establishment of ICD-10 code for Gulf War Illness

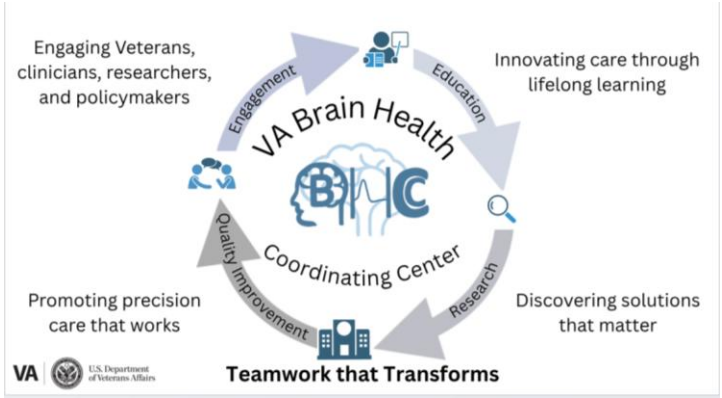
ISRM Research Infrastructure: Centers

- Rehabilitation Research and Development Centers (mission-driven research for Veterans)
- Health Systems Research Centers of Innovation (embedded research, capacity-building)
- Consortia of Research (VA knowledge management, data curation, impact measures)
  - Access and Community Care
  - Nursing Data and Research
  - Pain/Opioid CORE
  - Suicide Prevention
  - Virtual Care
  - Veteran Employment and Economic Security
  - Coming soon: AI-CORE
- ***NEW***: Cross-portfolio Center RFA: MERP/GWI, Suicide Prevention, BBMH

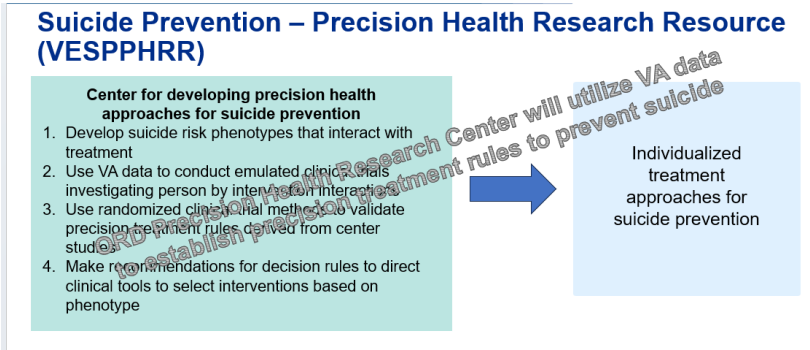
AMPs: Learning Health Systems



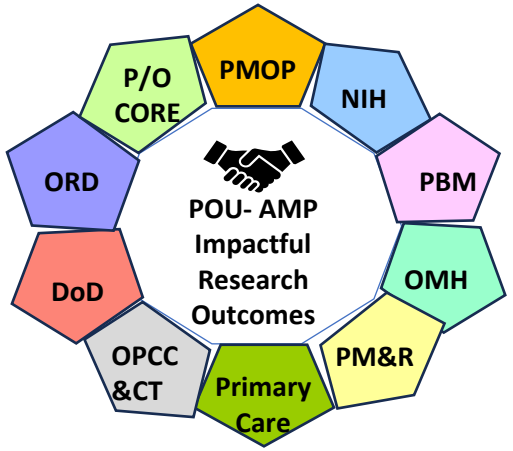
Precision Oncology



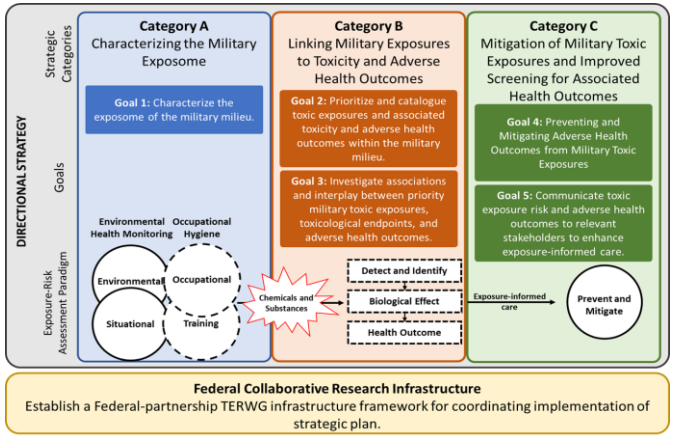
Traumatic Brain Injury



Suicide Prevention



Pain / Opioid Use



Military Exposures/Gulf War

QUERI VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE

MVP MILLION VETERAN PROGRAM

ESP Evidence Synthesis Program

ISRM Scientific Peer Review Process At a Glance

Policies based on VHA Guidance, NIH eRA, and related Executive Orders (e.g., 14303)

ISRM Publishes NOSIs (specify subject areas) and RFAs (specify mechanism)

>2,000 applications are submitted from researchers embedded in the field

ISRM assigns applications to peer review committees (VA and non-VA SMEs)

Second level review by ISRM Directors and Program Staff

15-20% of projects selected for funding based on score and program priorities

Central Tenets:

- Reproducible
- Transparent
- Conveys errors and uncertainty
- Collaborative and interdisciplinary
- Skeptical of findings and assumptions
- Structured for falsifiability
- Unbiased peer review
- Negative results as positive outcomes
- No conflicts of interest

How to Apply for VA Research Funding

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

1 Start Here
Talk to Your Local VA Research Office
Connect with your ACOS/R and admin staff to understand local requirements.

2 Review
Review the NOSIs
Look for Notices of Special Interest that match your research focus.

3 Follow
Follow the RFA
Understand what's required in your application.
Start with a pre-application if applicable.

4 Select Group
Select appropriate scientific review group
Review groups generally meet twice a year on Winter/Summer or Spring/Fall cycle.

5 Submit
Submit Through Your Local Office
Work with your site's research staff to finalize and submit your documents.

6 Admin Review
Administrative Review of Your application
Your pre-application is reviewed by ISRM staff.

7 Peer Review
Scientific Review of Your application
Your application is reviewed by a Peer Review Group under ISRM.

8 Portfolio Review
Portfolio Review
ISRM leadership and the Portfolio Director makes the final funding decision based on scores and priorities.

Need Help
VHAISRM@va.gov
Go to your local SPM for hands-on support.