

PURVIEW OF BLR&D AND CSR&D SCIENTIFIC REVIEW GROUPS

Merit Review Award applications submitted to BLR&D and CSR&D are those which involve Veteran-centric preclinical biomedical and behavioral research as well as clinical research including epidemiology and single-site or small multi-site clinical trials. These applications are reviewed by specific Scientific Review Groups (SRGs). The following purview provides general guidelines used for assignment of applications to these SRGs. Although applicants request assignment to a specific SRG, final assignments are determined by BLR&D/CSR&D Service Directors, principally based on the SRG most appropriate to provide the best scientific review. SRGs may be divided at the discretion of the Service Directors. The acronyms used in Electronic Research Administration (eRA) Commons are listed in [brackets].

Single-site or multi-site clinical trials will be reviewed in the SRG that most aligns with the proposed research.

NOTE: All clinical trial applications, career development, collaborative merit, validation studies, and lead isolation and optimization and Pre-IND studies of drugs and biologics require an approved LOI. Guidelines regarding the preparation and submission of LOIs may be found on the [BLR&D/CSR&D Resources for the VA Research Community](#) webpage.

NOTE: During the receipt and referral process, applications are first sorted into Initial Review Groups (IRGs) with names like NB2, BMR1, etc. These IRGs are temporary and the placement of an application is not final until it is assigned to an SRG.

A. Cardiovascular Studies [CARA/CARB]. CARA/CARB reviews applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases and disorders of the heart and vascular system, including the effects of aging. CARA/CARB also reviews studies on the etiology and pathogenesis of idiopathic hypertension. CARA will evaluate applications with a focus on heart diseases and CARB will evaluate applications with a focus on vascular diseases. NEPH reviews nephrogenic hypertension. ENDA reviews endocrine hypertension. NURB reviews studies of innervation and neural control of the heart.

B. Cellular and Molecular Medicine [CAMM]. CAMM reviews applications focused on cellular and molecular biology, biochemistry, biophysics, genetics or cellular senescence that are not restricted to a disease process or organ system but must show a clear translational pathway to improving the healthcare of Veterans. CAMM also reviews applications aimed at the development of analytical tools and systems that may form a novel diagnostic platform with translational potential for reducing the healthcare burden of chronic diseases and conditions prevalent in Veterans. The testing and development of diagnostic tools for a specific disease may be reviewed by the appropriate subject area SRG. In addition, CAMM reviews applications that investigate basic biological process of stem cells, induced pluripotent stem cells, and the differentiation of skeletal muscle cells. *Applications to study specific lineage determinant of stem cells, transplantation of stem cells to remedy deficits in an organ system, or differentiation of smooth muscles as related to an organ system are reviewed by the appropriate organ system SRG. Applications to examine innervation of muscles and neuromuscular dysfunctions are reviewed by NURB.*

C. Endocrinology [ENDA & ENDB]. ENDA reviews applications focused on the biology, physiology, molecular biology, and genetics of regulation of all endocrine organs and their products (e.g., insulin, glucagon, corticosteroids, sex hormones). Applications studying the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases associated with endocrine abnormalities (e.g., diabetes, Cushing's syndrome, hyperthyroidism, obesity, the effect of aging) are also reviewed by ENDA. ENDB reviews applications focused on bone and mineral metabolism (e.g. cell biology of bone formation, fracture healing, bone resorption, osteoporosis, vitamin D, calcium studies), including the specific effects of aging. *Applications that study diabetic neuropathies and retinopathies are reviewed in NURB and NURF, respectively.*

D. Gastroenterology [GAST]. GAST reviews applications focused on the biology and physiology (e.g., GI motility, regulation of GI secretion, digestion, nutrition, absorption, GI mucosal healing) of the gastrointestinal (GI) system, and of associated organs such as liver, spleen, gallbladder, and pancreas. GAST also reviews applications that study the etiology, pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases of the GI system. Applications focused on studying the effects of aging, immunologic, neurogenic, infectious, toxic, or carcinogenic agents on the GI system are also reviewed by GAST.

E. Hematology [HEMA]. HEMA reviews applications focused on the physiology of the cellular and non-cellular constituents of blood, including the processes of hemostasis, thrombosis, blood coagulation, cell adhesion, hemo-compatibility, hematopoiesis, fibrinolysis and the effects of aging on these processes. Studies on the etiology, pathogenesis, pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of benign and malignant blood diseases such as leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, anemia, polycythemia vera, and thrombocytopenia are reviewed by HEMA. HEMA also reviews studies focused on normal and abnormal macrophage, platelet, and neutrophil functions that serve to improve the health of Veterans.

F. Immunology and Dermatology [IMMA]. IMMA reviews applications that investigate mechanisms involved in functions of the immune system, including studies on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of autoimmune disease, immunodeficiency, immune-complex disorders, diseases related to allergic or delayed hypersensitivity reactions, and osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis as a result of a military and/or environmental exposure experienced by Veterans. Applications that evaluate the effects of aging on the immune system and studies on immuno-pharmacology, immuno-genetics, and dermatological disorders of immunologic or unknown etiology, and immunology of organ transplantation are reviewed by IMMA. IMMA also reviews proposals on immunotherapy development when the study focuses on the immune system. *Applications on cancer immunotherapy are reviewed in the Oncology panel focused on specific cancer subtypes. INFA/INFB reviews applications studying the immune response to specific infectious agents and vaccine development. PULM reviews applications focused on lung immunity.*

G. Infectious Diseases [INFA and INFB]. INFA/INFB reviews applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of infectious diseases of man and relevant animal infection models, including studies of the effects of aging on infectious diseases. Areas of investigation include pathogenic mechanisms, host-defense mechanisms, immune responses to

specific infectious agents, life cycles of the infectious agent, anti-microbial drug therapies, and vaccine development. **INFA** reviews applications pertaining to viral infections while **INFB** reviews applications on all other infectious agents. *IMMA reviews studies on basic immunologic mechanisms that relate to all classes of infectious agents. The appropriate organ or system SRG may review studies on organ pathology associated with an infectious agent.*

H. Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences [MHBA/C/P]. **MHBA** reviews pre-clinical studies of the etiology, pathobiology, diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric and behavioral disorders including psychotic disorders, mood and anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Applications to this panel are typically animal models, human tissue, and/or genetic samples.

Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences-Clinical [MHBC]. **MHBC** reviews clinical studies of the etiology, pathobiology, diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric and behavioral disorders including psychotic disorders, mood and anxiety disorders. In addition, this panel reviews all mental/behavioral disorder clinical trials, with the exception of those focused on PTSD. This panel DOES NOT review projects focused on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; PTSD studies will be reviewed in MHBP.

Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences-PTSD [MHBP]. **MHBP** reviews clinical studies of the etiology, pathobiology, diagnosis and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In addition, MHBP will review clinical trials for the pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment of PTSD.

I. Neurobiology [NURA/NURB/NURC/NURD/NURE/NURP/NURR]. **Neurobiology** SRGs review applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases of the central and peripheral nervous systems that will advance health care for Veterans. This SRG is sub-divided into more specific Subcommittees depending upon applications received for a round.

NURA reviews applications that address the neurotoxicological and behavioral outcomes of substance abuse and addictive disorders. Applications focused on substance use, including alcohol and drugs of abuse, that evaluate drug dependence, addiction, tolerance, sensitization, craving, or withdrawal are reviewed by **NURA**. **NURA** may also review studies on the effects of aging on the above conditions and studies on the anatomical, biochemical, and/or molecular basis of mental or emotional disorders. The behavioral, genetic etiology, pathobiology, and treatment of the above conditions are reviewed by **NURA**. *Organ-specific SRGs will review applications dealing with the effects of the alcohol or drugs of abuse on specific peripheral organs (e.g., **PULM** reviews pulmonary effects of smoke inhalation; **GAST** reviews alcoholic liver diseases). **MHBA/B** will review applications that focus on observational, clinical studies and clinical trials related to psychiatric and behavioral disorders. Alcohol or drug use secondary to PTSD, anxiety, depression or schizophrenia may be reviewed by **MHBA/B**.*

NURB reviews applications that focus on damage and trauma to the peripheral nervous system (e.g., peripheral or diabetic neuropathies) as well as studies involving epilepsy, and/or neuronal plasticity. Applications focused on demyelinating disorders such as multiple sclerosis, as well as neuromuscular disorders, including those that involve the neuromuscular junction, are reviewed

by **NURB**. *Neuroendocrinological studies focusing on hypothalamic releasing factors, anterior or posterior pituitary hormones, or other glandular hormones (e.g., cortisol) will be reviewed by ENDA. Studies on neoplasms occurring in the nervous system will be reviewed by ONCA. SURG reviews studies that examine surgical approaches to resecting CNS tumors.*

NURC reviews studies of injury and trauma to the central nervous system, including spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, stroke, intracerebral and subarachnoid hemorrhage, and the effects of ablation or pressure on neuronal function caused by CNS tumors.

NURD reviews applications involving the mechanisms, diagnosis, and treatment of cognitive dysfunction related to Alzheimer's disease, other age-related dementias, the aging brain, cognitive impairment, and comorbidity of other health conditions. Applications that are reviewed by **NURD** focus on neurodegenerative pathophysiology, behavioral assessments, and functional imaging.

NURE reviews applications that study Parkinson's disease, upper and lower motor neuron disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and Huntington's disease. **NURE** primarily reviews studies focused on neurodegenerative pathophysiology, behavioral assessments, and functional imaging.

NURF reviews applications involving the sensory systems of vision, taste, hearing, and smell. Applications focusing on diabetic retinopathy are also reviewed by **NURF**.

NURR reviews applications involving sleep, circadian rhythms, and the neurological aspects of sleep disorders such as sleep apnea. *Respiratory control of sleep apnea is reviewed by PULM.* If not enough applications are received in this area, proposals suitable for **NURR** are reviewed by **NURB**.

NURP reviews research applications that study the anatomical, biochemical, and/or molecular basis of algasia (pain), analgesia, and analgesic tolerance in humans and animal models. Clinical treatment approaches emphasizing non-opioids and other analgesics are also reviewed in **NURP**.

J. Nephrology [NEPH]. NEPH reviews applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases and disorders of the kidney, including the effects of aging on these areas. Studies that address end-stage renal disease including peritoneal dialysis and renal function following transplantation are also reviewed by **NEPH**. **ONCA** reviews studies focused on renal carcinomas. *SURG reviews applications focused on the surgical approaches to disorders of the kidney and genitourinary tract.*

K. Oncology [ONCA/ONCB/ONCC/ONCD/ONCE]. Oncology SRGs review applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of various malignancies, including the effects of aging on these conditions. Studies that address various phases of the oncologic process, including cancer initiation, promotion, progression, and metastasis are reviewed by **Oncology SRGs**. **Oncology SRGs** also review applications focused on several types of cancer therapy (e.g., including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, immunotherapy, and gene therapy) and on premalignant conditions. *IMMA reviews applications focused on the*

*development of cancer immunotherapy when the study emphasizes immune system manipulation. The effects of solid tumors on the function of specific organs or systems are reviewed by the appropriate organ-specific SRG. **SURG** reviews surgical management of solid tumors.*

ONCA reviews applications focused on Urogenital Cancers (*e.g.* Renal, Bladder and Prostate; currently meeting with ONCD).

ONCB reviews applications focused on Aerodigestive Cancers (*e.g.* Head and Neck, Esophagus and Lung).

ONCC reviews applications focused on Digestive System Cancers (*e.g.* Barrett's esophagus, Liver, Pancreas, and Colorectal cancers).

ONCD reviews applications focused on Female-Specific Cancers (*e.g.* Breast, Ovarian, Cervical and Uterine; currently meeting with ONCA).

ONCE reviews applications focused all other cancers (*e.g.* Skin, Brain).

L. VA Psychiatrist Development [PSYC]. PSYC reviews CDA-1 applications for licensed M.D. psychiatrists responding to the Career Development Award (CDA-1) [IK1] for VA Psychiatrists RFA.

M. Pulmonary Medicine [PULM]. PULM reviews applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases and disorders of the lung, including the effects of aging. The effects of immunologic, infectious, carcinogenic, or toxic insults on the lung are reviewed by **PULM**. **PULM** also reviews applications addressing the effects of transplantation on pulmonary function, upper airway and respiratory control in sleep apnea/disordered breathing, and the biomechanics of mechanical ventilation. *Neural control of breathing in relation to circadian rhythms and sleep is reviewed in **NURR**. Sleep disorders as they relate to mood or cognitive function may be reviewed by **MHBA/B**.*

N. Research Career Scientist [RCSR]. RCSR reviews applications to the Research Career Scientist program. This program provides salary support for non-clinician scientists who have shown their commitment to VA research through committee participation, direction of core facilities, teaching, mentoring, supervising shared resources, acknowledgement of VA support, and other important research-related activities.

O. Special Emphasis Panel on Gulf War Research [SPLD]. SPLD reviews applications focused on the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases and other medical conditions that impact Veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. This includes well-characterized, diagnosable diseases that occur at excess rates in Gulf War Veterans as well as the undiagnosed chronic multisymptom illness that affects many Gulf War Veterans. This condition is characterized by persistent symptoms such as chronic headache, musculoskeletal pain, cognitive difficulties, fatigue, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory symptoms, neurological symptoms, and other abnormalities that are not explained by familiar medical or psychiatric diagnoses. The

development of genetic/genomic markers, alternative biomarkers, and other diagnostic tools for characterizing Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses is an important topic area considered by this SRG.

P. Special Emphasis Panel for Shared Equipment and Laboratory Animal infrastructure [SPLJ]. SPLJ reviews ShEEp, ShEEp-IC, and LAMb applications.

Q. Surgery [SURG]. SURG reviews applications focused on the surgical aspects of cardiac, thoracic, orthopedic, vascular, pulmonary, gastrointestinal, renal, and genitourinary tract disorders typically referred to the Surgical Service at the VA. Complications of major surgery such as hemostasis, altered immunity, secondary infection, sepsis, multi-organ failure, and reperfusion injury are reviewed by SURG. SURG reviews all facets of physical trauma, wound healing, surgical nutrition, burn treatment, and the surgical aspects of: organ transplantation, organ transplant survival, and immunosuppressive therapy. Surgical approaches to peripheral and central nervous system lesions, and reconstructive surgery, including surgical approaches of ophthalmological, head and neck, ear, nose, and throat disorders are reviewed in SURG. SURG also reviews studies of impotence, oral health (e.g., dental trauma and prostheses), and structural disorders of the oral cavity. *INFA/INFB reviews microbiological aspects of dental and periodontal disease. IMMA reviews immunologic aspects of organ transplantation. Malignancies of the oral cavity may be reviewed in ONCB.*

JOINT BLR&D/CSR&D SCIENTIFIC REVIEW GROUPS

SRO/Org Desig	Scientific Review Group (SRG)	SRO
INFA INFB RCSR	Infectious Diseases-A Infectious Diseases-B Research Career Scientist	Jane K. Battles, Ph.D. Jane.Battles@va.gov 202-443-5781
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SPLJ	ShEEP, ShEEp-IC, LAMb	Alex Chiu, Ph.D. Alex.Chiu@va.gov 202-443-5672
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