



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development

Field Conference Call – Meeting Notes Monday, May 17, 2021 at 1:30 pm ET

1. Welcome

Grant Huang, MPH, Ph.D.

Grant Huang welcomed attendees and highlighted ORD's efforts especially as VA celebrates Research Week this week.

2. ORD Topics

Grant Huang, MPH, Ph.D.

- Research Week

National VA Research is May 17–21. The main virtual event this year will take place Wednesday, May 19, 3 – 3:40 pm ET. A second virtual event will take place Friday, May 21, 3 – 5 pm. The event will be hosted by EES and streamed via Adobe Connect and Brightcove to people inside and outside the VA system. A link was provided for registering for these events. VA research award winners were mentioned and the field was encouraged to continue recognizing the tremendous work done by all VA investigators and research staff.

- ORD staff updates

ORD is pleased to announce that Tony Laracuente will begin as the ORD Director of Field Operations starting on May 23. More information will be provided regarding roles and activities. However, the field is already familiar with many of his activities including recent organization of training sessions on budget.

Additionally, Allen Dunlow, ORD Director of Finance, will be retiring at the end of June. More information will be provided on how responsibilities will be transitioned. However, ORD wants to thank Allen for all of his significant contributions to VA Research.

- Dimensions for VA

Charlie Festel / Gerry O'Keefe

Charlie Festel, ORD Web Manager, presented on a recently available resource, Dimensions for VA. This tool is a web-based SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) research discovery and analytics tool designed to help VA researchers and their VA partners navigate the universe of published research and funded projects. It connects over 117 million publications, 6 million awarded grants, 135 million patents, 620,000 clinical trials and 580,000 policy documents to deliver an unparalleled look at research globally. Based on the off-the-shelf Dimensions platform, *Dimensions for VA* adds the crucial feature of

filtering and displaying VA-related data – informing not only discovery, but making related analysis more efficient than ever for VA research.

Access Dimensions for VA directly from anywhere at <https://va.dimensions.ai>

- a) From inside the VA network (incl. VPN) access is automatic – no login required (although logging in lets you save searches, favorites, and export results)
- b) If you are outside VA network, you must create an account using your @va.gov email address and can then login to *Dimensions for VA* from anywhere (home computer, academic institution, mobile device, etc.).

Find a VA Quick Start Guide, Resources, and Video Tutorials on our site:
<https://vaww.hsrd.research.va.gov/dimensions>

While available now to anyone in VA, we are soliciting your interest and that of the people at your organization. We are interested in any questions or feedback you have. Contact Charlie Festel, HSR&D/CIDER Web Program Manager, at: dimensions@va.gov

3. Research Protections & Policy

Molly Klote, M.D., CIP

- **DocuSign** – the approval of DocuSign through the DocuSign SharePoint portal is for the use of the VA instance of DocuSign and does not give permission for the use of an affiliate’s instance of DocuSign.
- **Cloud Computing** – ORD has received approval to use the research appropriation to pay for computing services (SaaS) in the VAEC. The first use case (MVP GWAS) is being coordinated with IT. This is new ground for both groups and may take another month+ to work out process for prioritization and reimbursement pathways. Please be patient while we forge this new capability pathway.
- **VA Electronic Determination Aid (VAEDA)** – soft launch will occur in early June.
- **VAIRRS** – 99 VAMCs now live + CIRB – remaining facilities to onboard by June 30th.
- **Biosafety/Biosurety Survey** - The VHA Office of Research and Development (ORD) is launching an initiative to assist and strengthen biosafety and biosecurity across the VA research enterprise. To provide the Field with better support, ORD is gathering information about the challenges facing R&D officers and investigators with a data call requesting information regarding the management and use of biological and chemical agents.

The official data request will be provided by a contractor TJFACT, and will be shared with the field within the next week directly from the VA REDCap web application. This survey link is unique to the recipient, and cannot be forwarded. It may require reaching out to your team to complete. If someone else needs to receive this survey instead, please email bobbie.peterson@va.gov and provide the appropriate email address.

ORD requests that data call be completed by June 15, 2021.

The data call had recently been pilot tested with six research stations, which will be excluded from this phase of the data call.

Questions regarding this data call can be directed to the TJFACT Project Manager, Ms. Bobbie Peterson at bobbie.peterson@va.gov or the TJFACT Technical Leader, Mr. David Ausdemore at david.ausdemore@va.gov.

Thank you for assisting us with this endeavor to strengthening the VA research program.

4. Finance

Allen Dunlow

Mr. Dunlow informed the field that 4th quarter CC101 dollars had been distributed to all stations except the few that requested ORD not send them additional CC101 for the fiscal year. The field was reminded that 1st quarter CC101 for Fiscal Year 2021 was distributed last September. No additional CC101 will be distributed this fiscal year.

As the services push and pull current year funding in an attempt to minimize field carryover, Mr. Dunlow reminded the field to only accept additional funding if that funding would be obligated by 30 September 2021.

In closing, Mr. Dunlow stated that his finance team would work to make his retirement seamless to the field. Mr. Dunlow reminded the field that if there are any actions requested of him that have not been complete, the stations should bring those to his attention. Mr. Dunlow will work the coming weeks to transition actions to his current staff until such time as a new Director of ORD Finance is selected.

5. IT Updates

Carl Grunfeld, M.D., Ph.D.

There have been a lot of questions about use of Microsoft Office 365 **OneDrive** for sharing vs. use of research server folders now that **SFFX** folder control is being slowly rolled out to sites.

OneDrive is now on nearly all computers. We are rolling out SFFX file control to several sites each week.

SFFX allows researchers to control who has access to the folder, which is essential for data that is restricted, such as that from many human studies. If someone comes, you can add them without asking IT. If someone leaves, you can remove their access without asking IT. The use of server folders is also ideal for more than one person to access to raw data or large numbers of spreadsheets and documents.

OneDrive is best for a document or limited number of documents that you want a group to work on together. The documents are shared via e-mail, which now permits sending

larger files. (I just sent a 15 Gb file). The people you share it with will retain access to those documents as long as they are at the VA. If they change jobs at the VA, they still will have access, so don't use for things like human studies spreadsheets that personnel who change jobs are no longer are permitted to see.

Keeping your files on OneDrive allows storage up to 1Tb no matter the size of your hard drive. Saves space on the research drive. PII/PHI is permitted on OneDrive though you will get an e-mail saying they (an IT computer) detected what looks like PII/PHI.

6. WinRMS Training

Tony Laracuentente

We have put together a series of 4 WinRMS trainings focusing on different aspects of the program. The plan is to hold the sessions in June. Focus areas are:

Managing and Navigating WINRMS

- June 15 - TDAs – Allocations and Distributions Tabitha Randall, Kari Point, Tony Laracuentente
- June 16 - Salary Management
- June 21 - How to manage the noise in a download
- June 23 - Setting up Accounts Expense transfers and split account transactions, 1 hour

7. Service Updates

• Notes Regarding eRA

- **Use of Internet Explorer (IE) for eRA Modules to be Phased Out by July 19, 2021.** In the wake of Microsoft discontinuing support for IE by August, [eRA will phase out the use of IE](#) for its modules by July 19, 2021 due to security concerns. Please switch to other eRA-supported browsers. See [Tips & Tricks for Fixing Browser Configuration Issues When Using eRA Modules](#) webpage for common situations users may experience.
- The NIH has announced a new eRA Commons login option. **All users will be required to switch by September 15, 2021.** Please visit their web page [Two-Factor Authentication: Accessing eRA Modules via login.gov](#) for details.
- Users with the signing official (SO) role now have access to view summary statements and the overall impact score on the eRA Commons *Status Information* screen for VA-ORD applications.

• BLR&D Updates

Christopher T. Bever, Jr., MD, MBA

Review Reminder: The Spring review cycle is in process. Please remind investigators that they are not to contact their SPMs about their proposals until after the margin meeting in July.

Equipment Program: The RFAs for ShEEP and ShEEP-Imaging core will not be released this year. However, we are still accepting request for LAM equipment. Deadline for submission of LAM request is June 15, 2021. Please send questions to Alex.chiu@va.gov.

BLRD's Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) Award Program:

Clinician scientists with a competing renewal of their BLRD Merit Review under review for the Spring 2021 cycle are encouraged to apply for a Clinician Scientist Investigator (CSI) Award.

Before submitting a nomination package, please consult with the appropriate Scientific Program Manager once the investigator has received their score and percentile.

All nomination packages must be submitted to the VHABLRD-CSR@va.gov mailbox by the research office before June 23rd, 2021.

Application information for the CSI program can be found on our new CSI website:

<https://www.research.va.gov/services/blrd/csi.cfm>

For additional questions about this program please contact: Kimberlee.potter@va.gov

BLRD Middleton Award:

2021 Research Week "VA Research: One Team, One Mission":

<https://www.research.va.gov/researchweek/2021.cfm> - May 19 (public event) and May 21 (research presentations) by our esteemed Middleton Awardees.

2019 Middleton – Dr. Steven Dubinett, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare system & Dr. Michael Zile, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medica Center

2020 Middleton – Dr. Stephen Plymate, VA Puget Sound Health Care System

2021 Middleton update:

It was the consensus of the Middleton review panel not to recommend anyone for the 2021 Middleton Award. The panel was sympathetic to the additional burden on research staff and nominees to prepare a strong package.

BLRD hopes to receive an overwhelming response to the call for nominations next year (deadline February 1st, 2022).

For additional questions about this program please contact: Kimberlee.potter@va.gov

• **RR&D Updates**

Patricia A. Dorn, Ph.D.

Congratulations Dr. Stephen G. Waxman!



Stephen G. Waxman, MD, PhD, Director of the RR&D Center for Restoration of Nervous System Function, was awarded the 2021 Mitchell B. Max Award from American Academy of Neurology for his work on Neuropathic Pain.

The award recognizes an individual for outstanding work in the field of neuropathic pain for either a single contribution or for lifetime achievement. There is a certificate of recognition and a \$1000 prize associated with the award. The Mitchell B. Max award for Neuropathic Pain is sponsored by the American Academy of Neurology and endowed by the United States Cancer Pain Relief Committee, the Mayday Fund, and friends of Dr. Mitchell Max. Dr. Max was an internationally recognized neurologist and pain researcher, particularly in the area of neuropathic pain.

Dr. Waxman is considered to be the “father of sodium channels”, tirelessly studying the genetics, molecular biology and physiology of sodium channels and linking them to neuropathic painful conditions such as small fiber neuropathy, burn, chemotherapy and injury-induced pain, conditions prevalent in the Veteran population. Dr. Waxman has published over 700 papers including seminal clinical trials using sodium channel blockers to reverse painful conditions such as erythromelalgia. He is a recipient of numerous awards, including the VA ORD’s Magnuson and Middleton awards, the Physiological Society’s Annual Prize, and more recently, the Julius Axelrod Prize from the Society for Neuroscience.

General Announcements

Paul B. Magnuson Award:

The Paul B. Magnuson Award is presented annually to a VA RR&D investigator who exemplifies the entrepreneurship, humanitarianism, and dedication to veterans displayed by Dr. Magnuson during his career. The award was established in 1998 in recognition of the importance of rehabilitation research within the VA Health Care System. The award consists of a one-time \$5,000 cash award to an individual, \$50,000 per year for 3 years supplemental funding for their ongoing peer-reviewed research, and a celebratory plaque.

Nominations for the 2022 Paul B. Magnuson Award are being accepted through September 1, 2021. Please refer to [Program Guide 1203.06](#) and the [Instructions for Preparing and Submitting a Nomination Packet](#).

Review Updates

New Funding Opportunity

RR&D announced *Supplements for VA Investigators with Active RR&D Merit Awards to Curate Computable Phenotypes and Submit to the VA Phenomics Library – CIPHER* (attached below) on April 14, 2021. **Please distribute widely.**

Timelines

Deadline for submitting RR&D project modification requests: June 1, 2021

Communication of funding decisions: June 25, 2021

Funding start: July 1, 2021

Deadline for submitting end-products to CIPHER: June 30, 2022



CIPHER_RRD.pdf

Scientific Review Timelines (refer to applicable [FOA/RFA](#) for details):
Please continue to contact [RR&D](#) for guidance and to ask questions.

Spring 2021 – SPIRE:

- **NEW** RFA published – December 22, 2020
- LOI and Waiver Request deadline – February 1, 2021
- Last possible application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – March 10, 2021
- Scientific Review – April 22, 2021
- Scores and Summary Statements released – May 12, 2021
- Intent-to-Fund notifications – by late June 2021

Summer 2021 - Merit, Career Development and Research Career Scientist:

- Updated RFAs published – March 30, 2021
- LOI and Waiver Request deadline – May 3, 2021 (May 1 falls on a Saturday)
- Last possible application submission deadline (**no changed/corrected applications after this date**) – June 10, 2021
 - **NOTE: Biographical Sketch Format (OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 12/2020 Approved Through 02/28/2023) must be used**
- Scientific Review – August 5-13, 2021
- Scores released – August 17, 2021
- Summary Statements released – September 7, 2021
- Intent-to-Fund notifications – by late September 2021

• **HSR&D & QUERI Updates**

Naomi Tomoyasu, Ph.D.,
David Atkins, M.D., MPH
Amy Kilbourne, Ph.D., MPH

Winter funding round

HSRD has released all funding decisions. We maintained a good pay line for our IIRs, yet we could not fund everything with potentially meritorious score. We are holding some projects from early career investigators which came close but did not reach funding line for possible funding should we have ability.

- 108 IIR and SDR proposals; 24 funded (4 from SDRs)

HSRD Pull Back/Project Modifications/Budget Updates

- 2021 Commitments/Carryover: We have been receiving project mods to return 2021 funds and reallocate funds totaling approximately \$2 million. All simple requests to redistribute funds without cost increase will be approved. You will need your PIs to assure they will be able to spend any additional funds reallocated to 2022.
- The return of funds should put us in position to fund all of our remaining commitments in 2021 but we do not anticipate have extra money for new requests for 2021 funds.

Hiring 2 SPMs

We are recruiting to replace our SPMs in Aging and in Health Informatics. We received 61 applications from the DEU announcement in USAJobs which closed on 5/11. The MP announcement in USAJOB is still open and closes on May 18, 2021. If interested, please apply using the following link <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/600024700>

Strategic Planning

HSRD had its final large group Strategic Planning meeting to review its goals and objectives and begin work of developing strategies to address immediate short-term goals. Goals cover Research Impact, Funding alignment, Research Infrastructure Efficiencies, and Workforce Development

SMRB Decisions:

Update on COVID Funding opportunities:

- a) We anticipate funding additional supplements submitted under Impacts of delayed/deferred care (Non-COVID impacts): Final decisions once we have processed all of the funding mods submitted. We are reviewing a single proposal for a 2 year all-cause mortality study. This group will also coordinate other studies funded under this initiative. We expect individual studies for the June submission on specific outcomes such as mental health, acute care and chronic disease.
- b) Long-term outcomes of COVID:
 - i. COVID Outcomes Research Collaboratory (CORC) will be funded this month. Expanding interest on the program side how to best care for patients with long COVID.

VA ORD Research Supplements to Promote Diversity

CHOIR Student Scholar Program (CSSP)

HSR&D will be working with Dr. Keith McInnes, at the CHOIR COIN, to pilot a Summer Program for Professional Development and Research Skills for medical students at Boston University School of Medicine.

CHOIR Student Scholar Program (CSSP) is a summer training and career development program for medical students from underrepresented groups interested in health services research and academic medicine. It will be developed in collaboration with Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) and modelled after their existing Evans Student Scholar Program. CHOIR will be working closely with BUSM to identify appropriate students for CSSP's first year, which will begin in the summer 2021. CSSP's pilot will identify 3-4 students who will participate in a 6-week training program from mid-June to the end of July, 2021. Subsequent cohorts may be larger. It is hoped that this pilot, if effective, may be scaled to other COINs.

Recipients of the 2020 HSR&D Field-Based Awards

Best Research Paper of the Year Award:

- [Yancy, William \(Durham COIN\)](#)

Health System Impact Award (joint 3-way):

- [Klap, Ruth \(Greater LA COIN\)](#)
- [Hagedorn, Hildi \(Minneapolis COIN\)](#)
- [Gordon, Adam \(Salt Lake City COIN\)](#)

Daniel Deykin Award:

- [Chinman, Matthew \(CHERP-Pittsburgh COIN\)](#)

QUERI Updates -

- **Updated FY22 budgets due by June 7**

For QUERI centers (with end dates in FY22 or later) that have FY22 changes to the distribution of QUERI funding across **existing sites**, make sure to submit an updated budget table and justification to Melissa by **June 7**. Include a **bulleted list of changes in the body of the email** and **attach updated budget documents** (Excel format for budget tables, Word format or pdf for justifications).

If you do not have any changes to your FY22 budget, then there is nothing you need to do. Funds will go out at the beginning of FY22 based on your last approved budget submission.

- **FY21 budget changes and/or returned funds due by July 23**

If you have any FY21 changes that affect your budget (e.g., changes in distribution of funding across sites, returning funds), submit these changes via the [ORD Finance SharePoint site](#) (if returning funds or changing the distribution of funding across existing sites) or by submitting a project modification form (for all other changes, such as adding a site) to Melissa by July 23.

Make sure to spend all your FY21 funding by September 30, 2021 or return your funds by July 23, 2021. Any funding not spent will be swept at the end of the fiscal year.

- **QUERI Global and ADIL RFAs Informational Cyberseminar on April 13**
The QUERI RFA informational cyberseminar provided an overview of the QUERI Global RFA and Initiative to Advance Diversity in Implementation Leadership (ADIL) RFA on April 13 at 11am ET. The cyberseminar was recorded, and the recording is posted in the [HSRD cyberseminar archive](#).
- **Summer 2021 QUERI Global ITS due May 17**
The [QUERI Global Merit Review RFA](#) for the Summer 2021 cycle was posted on the [ORD RFA website](#) on April 1. The ITS deadline is May 17.
- **QUERI Supplemental Applications due May 19**
QUERI has received **additional FY21 funding** for implementation and evaluation. If you have additional projects and **you can spend funds by September 30, 2021**, please submit an application for supplemental funding using the application link below **by May 19**. Funds will be sent as a supplement to an existing QUERI-funded project. **The total amount of funding requested cannot exceed \$50K.**

Application instructions and link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FY21QUERISupplements>

- **QUERI Midyear Reports due May 17**
Updated guidelines and unique REDCap report links (for completing midyear or final reports via REDCap) were sent out in March.

SMRB Update

- **Winter 2021 Cycle**
 - Funding decisions were communicated from our staff directly to the research offices and from eRA (with Notices of Intent to-Fund or Not-to-Fund) on April 22, 2021.
 - Funding was approved for the following applications: 24 – IIRs/SDRs, 5 - Pilots, 6 - CDAs, and 1 - Innovation Phase II/Implementation award.
- **Summer 2021 Cycle**
 - New and revised RFAs were posted on March 26, 2021 on the intranet site. Please review the RFAs thoroughly to check for any changes in requirements and to ensure compliance.
 - On April 28, 2021, VA-ORD released an updated VA-ORD Application Guide SF424 (R&R). This Forms Version F (dated April 28, 2021) is applicable for all VA-ORD application submissions beginning with the Summer 2021 review

cycle. Please carefully review the guidance in this document along with the VA-ORD Service-specific FOA/RFA prior to submitting applications.

- The HSR&D Intent-to-Submit in ART opened **April 23, 2021** and closed on **May 7, 2021** (at 8:00 pm EST).
- The first day to submit full applications (using Grants.gov Workspace or eRA ASSIST) is May 15, 2021 and the last possible submission day is June 10, 2021.
- HSR&D's Scientific Merit Review Board and Career Development Award review meetings are both scheduled to take place virtually August 24 - 27, 2021.

For questions regarding the review process, please contact Scientific Merit Review Program staff at vhacoscirev@va.gov

- **CSR&D Updates**

Terri Gleason, Ph.D.

CSR&D is highly focused on the current review round right now, with the combined BL and CS panels meeting over the next few weeks. Most if not all staff are focused on identifying the most meritorious research to be funded following scientific expert peer review, and we appreciate everyone respecting the integrity of the process by not contacting SPMs about applications under review and never ever contacting reviewers directly about their evaluations.

CSR&D received a good number of requests for redistribution of funds, acknowledging of course the extent to which clinical research has been adversely impacted by the pandemic. The return of funds and reset of end dates has resulted in an opportunity for research supplements, which we have now reviewed. Many supplemental requests were submitted by the field to cover ways that CSR&D researchers might work to catch up on work delayed due to the pandemic have been approved. Thank you for your submissions, and you will hear about approvals very soon. In this regard I particularly want to acknowledge all CSR&D staff who have been working to stay on top of the many funding requests, and especially Lisa Eiben our Administrative Officer, and Miriam Smyth, Deputy Director CSR&D.

We continue to encourage subscription and attention to our specialized early – the earliest level we support - mentored research training awards at the CDA1 level for scientists who are psychiatrists, or working in the field of suicide prevention, or Veterans, or from under-represented populations. Please see: [Career Development Program for Biomedical Laboratory and Clinical Science R&D Services \(va.gov\)](#)

And our highlight for this VA RESEARCH week includes the presentation of the CSR&D John Blair Barnwell award on Wednesday and Friday this week – two presentations available to all of our community – for Jeff Curtis from the Ann Arbor VA for 2019 and Dave Oslin from the Philadelphia VA for 2020. We are really delighted that everyone can actually participate virtually!