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AMERICAN THORACIC SOCIETY | WASHINGTON DC

# VA RESEARCH FUNDING fact sheet



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Program is one of the nation's premier biomedical and behavioral health research endeavors. VA's research program helps ensure the highest standard of care for veterans and in all of American health care.

## **BACKGROUND: VA MEDICAL AND PROSTHETICS RESEARCH PROGRAM**

### **The VA Research Program conducts good science**

For over 60 years, the VA research program has been improving veterans' lives through innovation and discovery that has led to advances in health care for veterans and all Americans. The VA research program hosts three Nobel Laureates, six Lasker Award recipients, and produces a growing number of scientific papers annually, many of which are published in the most highly regarded peer-reviewed scientific journals.

### **The VA Research Program is veteran-centric**

Like NIH, all projects funded by the VA research program are peer-reviewed for scientific merit. Unlike the NIH, research proposals are also reviewed to ensure they are relevant to the health needs of veterans. While the research findings help all Americans, the additional programmatic review ensures that the VA research program continues to serve the special needs of men and women who are served in our nation's armed forces.

### **The VA Research Program is intramural**

Researchers must be 5/8 employed by the VA to be eligible for a VA research award. In addition to producing good science, the VA research program is an effective way of attracting and retaining top caliber medical talent to serve our nations veterans. The VA research programs bring the scientific spirit of inquiry to the patient bedside.

### **FY12 Request**

The ATS recommends \$611 million for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program. Additionally, we recommend \$200 million be provided in the VA construction budget to address the deteriorating conditions at many VA laboratories.

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## FUNDING NEEDS IN BASIC, CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH (\$620 MILLION):

### OEF/OIF Veterans

- Poly Trauma – including lung related blast injuries
- PTSD
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Respiratory conditions from burn pits and other respiratory exposures

### Genomic Medicine

- Reducing drug trial failure by identifying genetic disqualifiers and allowable treatment of eligible populations.
- Tracking genetic susceptibility for disease and develop preventative measures.
- Predicting responses to medications.
- Modifying drugs and treatments to match an individual's unique genetic structure.

### Improving Quality Care

- Five Data and Statistical Coordinating Centers
- Four Epidemiology Research Centers
- Pharmacy Coordinating Center
- Health Economics Resource Center
- Pharmacogenomics Analysis Laboratory

## FUNDING NEEDS IN VA RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING (\$200 MILLION):

In recent years, funding for VA maintenance and construction has failed to provide the resources needed by VA to maintain, upgrade, and replace its aging research facilities. Consequently, many VA facilities have run out of adequate research space. Without state-of-the-art facilities, researchers cannot conduct state-of-the-art research. Deteriorating VA lab conditions are undermining the ability of some VA hospitals to attract and retain physicians.

VA is conducting an internal audit to gauge the infrastructure needs of the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research Program. To date, a total of 53 sites within 47 research programs have been surveyed. Approximately 20 sites remain to be assessed in FY 2012. Internally, VA estimates the combined total estimated cost for improvements exceeds \$570 million. About 44 percent of the estimated correction costs constitute "priority 1" deficiencies — those with an immediate need for correction to return components to normal service or operation; stop accelerated deterioration; replace items that are at or beyond their useful life; and correct life-safety hazards.

In House Report 109-95 accompanying FY 2006 VA appropriations, the House Appropriations Committee expressed concern that "equipment and facilities to support the research program may be lacking and that some mechanism is necessary to ensure the Department's research facilities remain competitive."