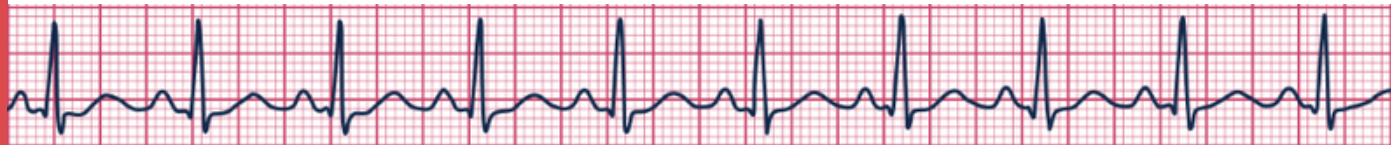


VA Research Newsletter

FEBRUARY
2025



FROM THE CHIEF OF RESEARCH



February is an appropriate month to spotlight science of the heart, both literal and metaphorical. Our local studies range from cutting-edge cardiology clinical trials to the fascinating ways that emotion and cognitive function can benefit from art therapy. We also express our admiration to the Research Office administrative team for leading a successful review by the national VA Office of Research Oversight. For guidance on conducting VA research, please visit our [webpage](#). We would love to help you achieve your research goals!

-David Clark, Associate Chief of Staff for Research Service

FEATURED INVESTIGATOR



David Winchester, MD is the Assistant Chief of Cardiology at the Malcom Randall Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and Professor in the departments of Medicine and Radiology at the University of Florida. He earned bachelor's degrees in microbiology and sociology from the University of Florida, and medical degree from the University of South Florida. He completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of Virginia and then returned to UF for a cardiology fellowship and master's degree in Clinical and Translational Science. Dr. Winchester practices general cardiology, focusing on noninvasive imaging, including echocardiography, nuclear cardiology, and cardiac computed tomography. His research interests include health system science and educational scholarship. He is a prior recipient of a VA research career development award and has served as an investigator for international cardiovascular trials such as PROMISE, ISCHEMIA, and VALOR-QI. He is the lead author of the American College of Cardiology 2023 Appropriate Use Criteria for Imaging in Chronic Coronary Disease. Dr. Winchester has received several awards for research and teaching and has served in national leadership roles with the American College of Cardiology, the American Medical Association, and the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology.

FEATURED RESEARCH STAFF



De Miller-Sellers, PT, DPT is the Human Research Manager for the Cognitive/Emotion Function Initiative of the VA Brain Rehabilitation Research Center (BRRC). She is a licensed Physical Therapist with over 37 years of experience, including private practice and biomedical consulting. She joined the VA in 2017 and was initially involved in stroke rehabilitation studies. During COVID and thereafter, she was also involved in clinical practice at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center, treating ALS and Parkinson's patients for the Veterans Rural Health Centers. In 2021 she joined the BRRC's Cognitive/Emotion Function Initiative where she conducts research on post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, including art therapy to promote recovery of cognitive and emotional health. She loves speaking with veterans and enjoys recruiting research participants and presenting research studies to veterans' organizations in the community. De has a special interest in canine rehabilitation and has formal training in treating canines recovering from trauma. She is also a talented baker! She bakes for stress relief, so if you want cupcakes or cookies give her a shout!

ORO COMBINED PROGRAM REVIEW



North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System completed a successful Combined Program Review by the national VA Office of Research Oversight (ORO). This was a comprehensive review of general research administration, human research protection, research safety, animal welfare, and research information security. ORO's review began in November with extensive remote review of documents and agreements, followed in January by a week of teleconference interviews and then a week of onsite interviews, tours, and inspections.

These reviews only happen every 5-6 years, so it's a big event! Based on the comments of the ORO team during exit briefings, we performed well above average compared to other VA sites across the country. Each pillar of our research oversight program (human, animal, and safety) received praise from the reviewers. The ORO team was impressed by the efficiency of the admin staff who gathered the many required documents, including Sofia Ortiz, Tiffany Ramsey, Paige Webb, Helen Vaillancourt, and Michael Merritt. There was also high praise for our regulatory collaborations with UF (particularly the UF Institutional Review Board), collaboration with the VA research pharmacy (led by Alan Mumford), and excellent communication throughout the entire research program including with the NF/SGVHS Chief of Staff (Ilona Schmalfluss) and Medical Center Director (Wende Dottor). The reviewers mentioned the Research Service webpage (including Research Coordinator Guidebook) as being excellent and refreshing to see. They were impressed by our close relationship with Research Compliance Officers Marlene Thomas and Katie Yeckring. The ORO team reported that our Research Coordinators were excellent, and the investigators were honest in answering questions, showed enthusiasm for conducting VA research, and were pleased with the customer service from the Research Office. They also offered valuable recommendations that will further promote excellence in our research program. Thank you to all research-affiliated employees who made this review a success!

VA RESEARCH SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

Clinical Studies

109

Human subject and
medical record research



Proportion of Clinical and
Preclinical Research Studies

Preclinical Studies

25

Animal and bench research

Principal Investigators

51

With active projects

Research Staff and Administrative Staff

46

Research Affiliates

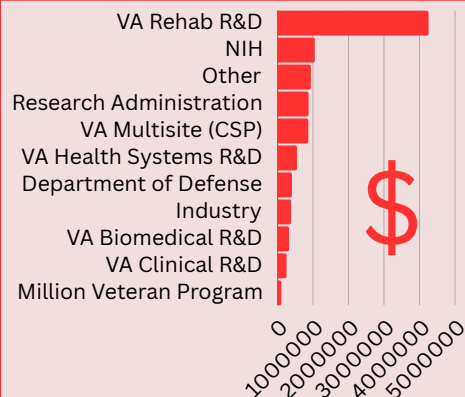
185

Interagency agreements or
non-compensated employees
(UF and NFFRE personnel)

Annual Research Expenditures

**\$10.04
million**

Fiscal Year 2024



Projects funded by US Department of Veterans Affairs

26

FY25, Year to Date

Research Space: Square Feet

30,287

Research Space: # Rooms

160

Research Equipment

1,357

Pieces of equipment