

MARCH
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NORTH FLORIDA/SOUTH GEORGIA VETERANS HEALTH SYSTEM

VA Research Newsletter



FROM THE CHIEF OF RESEARCH

As we enter a period of change for federally-supported research, it is more important than ever to connect with colleagues. Through team science, we benefit from the creativity and resilience that scientists are known for, and can leverage a more diverse array of funding sources. VA team science that is closely aligned with clinical priorities and/or clinical care will be more fundable than “stand alone” projects. Please seek feedback from program officers and local experts when planning award proposals. Research Service looks forward to continuing to support investigators and to deliver on our mission of improving Veterans’ health through research discoveries. For guidance on conducting VA research, please visit our [webpage](#).

-David Clark, Associate Chief of Staff for Research Service

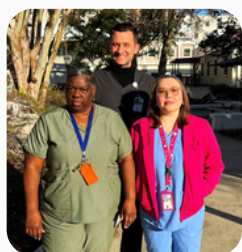


FEATURED INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Kay Waid-Ebbs is a rehabilitation scientist at the Cognition and Emotion Function Research Initiative of the VA Brain Rehabilitation Research Center (BRRC). She earned her master’s degree in clinical behavioral psychology from Eastern Michigan University. As a clinician, she worked as a behavior analyst in a locked traumatic brain injury (TBI) rehabilitation unit. She later established and directed a transitional living center in Augusta GA for patients recovering from TBI. With an interest in evidence-based cognitive interventions, she pursued a PhD from the Rehabilitation Science doctoral program at the University of Florida. She started her research as a Pre-Doctoral Associated Health Rehabilitation Research Fellow at the BRRC in 2006 and received multiple VA Career Development Awards. Her recent research focuses on cognitive interventions and assessments for Veterans diagnosed with mild TBI and post-traumatic stress disorder. These projects are funded by VA SPIRE and Merit Review awards. Based on her work, an intervention called Goal Management Training has been clinically recommended by VA and DoD for cognitive intervention in Veterans with mild TBI. Her current work also seeks to determine whether tele-health is as effective as in-person delivery of a metacognitive intervention, and to determine the effectiveness of an emotion recognition treatment for Veterans with mild TBI and PTSD. Dr. Waid-Ebbs conducts her research at multiple VA clinical sites (Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Lake City) in partnership with Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service.



FEATURED RESEARCH STAFF



We are proud to highlight our Veterinary Medical Unit (VMU) technicians, who provide foundational support to the VA animal research program. **Cynthia Sanders** started her career in animal research care in 1986 with UF Animal Care Services, where she worked with many species ranging from cats, dogs, monkeys, sheep, rats, mice, and more. Cynthia retired from UF in 2016 and transitioned to a permanent position with Malcom Randall VAMC, now amassing over 39 years of experience in research animal care. **Paola Villalobos** graduated with a degree in Animal Science from New Mexico State University and has worked with a variety of exotic insects and animals including arachnids, reptiles, cats, dogs, livestock, mice, rats and more. Paola now has 13 years of experience working with various state/federal agencies. **Massimo Pascalli** is the Lead Technician at the Veterinary Medical Unit. With degrees in Chemistry from Moscow State University and Microbiology from UF, his journey in animal care began during his academic training, when he gained hands-on experience working with various species. Over the past 21 years, he has worked with animals ranging from small rodents to larger species such as swine and primates. Three years ago, he transitioned from UF Animal Care Services to the VA, where he is dedicated to enhancing all aspects of the animal research program. Our VMU technicians have a passion for advancing animal welfare and work hard to ensure the highest standards in veterinary research and husbandry.

RECENTLY APPROVED STUDIES

PI: Faye Pais, MD: A Phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo controlled, parallel group study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of belimumab administered subcutaneously in adults with interstitial lung disease (ILD) associated with connective tissue disease (CTD). Funded by GlaxoSmithKline Research & Development Limited.

PI: Christopher Hess, MD: The Veterans Parkinson's Disease Genetics Initiative (Vet-PD). Funded by The Michael J. Fox Foundation.

PI: Nicole Weston, PhD: Intermittent Theta Burst Stimulation (iTBS) Therapy for Alleviating Cognitive Deficits after Traumatic Brain Injury. Funded by the VA Office of Research and Development.

PI: Diana Gomez-Manjarres, MD. Determinants of Health Outcomes in Veterans with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis.



VA RESEARCH SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

Clinical Studies

112

Human subject and
medical record research



Proportion of Clinical and
Preclinical Research Studies

Preclinical Studies

26

Animal and bench research

Principal Investigators

52

With active projects

Research Staff and Administrative Staff

46

Research Affiliates

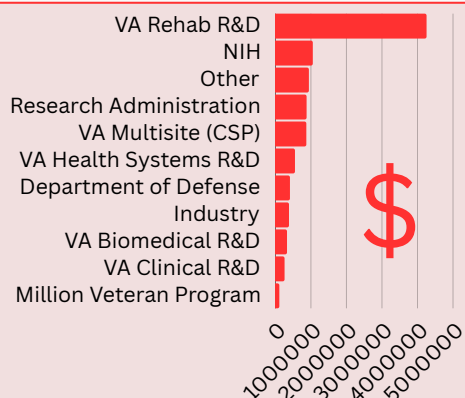
183

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

1,351

Pieces of equipment