

JULY 2024

NORTH FLORIDA/SOUTH GEORGIA VETERANS HEALTH SYSTEM

# VA Research Newsletter



## FROM THE CHIEF OF RESEARCH



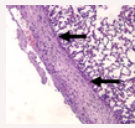
As we celebrate Independence Day, we reflect on the spirit of innovation that defines our nation's history. This month's newsletter shares updates pertaining to oncology research, research safety, and clinical translational of a caregiver support program. For guidance on conducting VA research, please visit our [webpage](#). We look forward to working with you! - David Clark, Associate Chief of Staff for Research Service

## FEATURED INVESTIGATOR



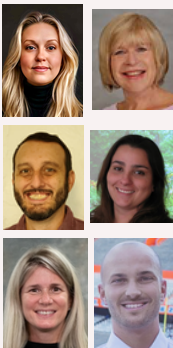
Dr. Brittany Rogers joined the Malcom Randall VAMC in 2020 as a Hematology/Oncology physician, followed the completion of her fellowship at UF. She currently serves as Assistant Chief of the Hematology/Oncology section. She is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at UF where she performs clinical duties and education to medical students, residents, and fellows. She is the co-director of the Cancer Biology and Clinical Oncology (CABCO) first year medical student course at UF. Her clinical focus is thoracic and head and neck oncology and her goal is to increase clinical trial options for our Veterans. As a part of VA SWOG, she is the site PI of NCI Lung MAP umbrella trial, a precision medicine trial investigating treatment options for patients with advanced lung cancer following disease progression on immunotherapy. She is the site PI of the phase III NCI clinical trial, Pragmatica, investigating the combination of a targeted drug plus immunotherapy compared to chemotherapy, in patients with progressive lung cancer. Dr. Rogers and the hematology/oncology section are in the process of opening several additional interventional clinical trials, with the common goal of improving outcomes for our Veterans with cancer.

## FEATURED RESEARCH STAFF



Dr. Kamal Mohammed began working with VA Research Service in 2003 as a scientist studying mechanisms of pleural injury, including the role of pleural mesothelial cells in pleural permeability, pleural fibrosis and Eph-receptor signaling in malignant mesothelioma tumor growth. His research was funded by the VA Biomedical Laboratory R&D Service, DOD, Florida Department of Health, and the NIH. Currently, he serves as the Research Safety Officer, where he conducts lab inspections and trains personnel on research safety in compliance with the federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration. He is Chair of the Subcommittee on Research Safety, and also serves on UF's Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), representing VA Research. Dr. Mohammed also serves on various other hospital-wide and research committees including the Research & Development Committee, Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee, Radiation Safety Committee, Safety and Health Leadership Committee, and Green Environmental Management Committee. Dr. Mohammed manages VA research core equipment and facilities, including ultra-low freezers, ultracentrifuges, molecular core equipment, and liquid nitrogen. Dr. Mohammed plays an invaluable role in maintaining research safety and compliance, to advance the goals of VA Research Service.

## CLINICAL RESEARCH IN ACTION



The Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC) joined forces with Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) Service to implement a nurse-led quality improvement program called RESCUE for Caregivers of Veterans with Lower Limb Loss. This is an educational and care coordination program. During FY 2023, Malcom Randall VA Medical Center provided care to the largest number of Veteran amputees in the nation. Cognitive decline is relatively common after major lower limb loss due to primary etiologies (e.g., diabetes) and advanced age. Therefore, providing education and support to caregivers is crucial in preventing negative health outcomes. The team conducted a multifocal needs assessment to identify the major healthcare and safety concerns of the Veteran Amputee-Caregiver dyad during the transitional (post-discharge to home) and long-term care phase. They created new educational tools (i.e., 258-page workbook with 39 factsheets and other tools) using health literacy principles to address these unique needs. This program was adapted from the RESCUE Stroke Caregiver program, which originated as a VA-funded research project. Limb loss and stroke caregiver resources are available on VA Sharepoint (<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vharescuecaregiving>). The RESCUE limb loss program was recently presented at the VHA National Patient Safety Symposium in Orlando.

Congratulations to the RESCUE Team: Casey Bopp, RN Coordinator; Connie Uphold, ARNP, FAAN, PhD; Nathaniel Eliazar-Macke, RN Interventionist; I. Maggie Freytes, PhD; Sandra Citty, ARNP, PhD; Carmen Fernandez, PsyD, Ifeyinwa Ilechukwu, MD; and Tommy Coffey, PT, DPT, CGS.

# VA RESEARCH SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

## Clinical Studies

**109**

Human subject and  
medical record research



Proportion of Clinical and  
Preclinical Research Studies

## Preclinical Studies

**29**

Animal and bench research

## Investigators

**51**

## Coordinators and Administrators

**44**

## Research Affiliates

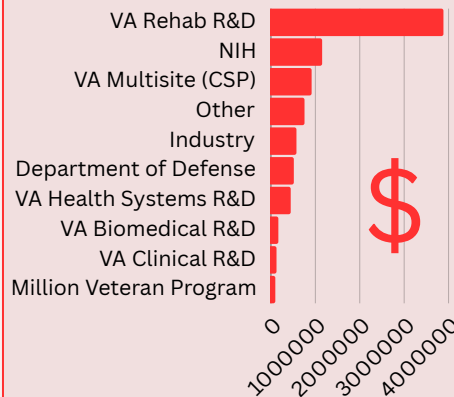
**213**

Interagency Agreements or  
Non-compensated Employees  
(UF and NFFRE personnel)

## Annual Research Expenditures

**\$9.7  
million**

Fiscal Year 2023



## Projects funded by US Department of Veterans Affairs

**40**

Active during Fiscal Year 2024

## Research Space: Square Feet

**30,287**

## Research Space: # Rooms

**160**

## Research Equipment

**1,116**

Pieces of equipment