

VA Research Newsletter

OCTOBER
2025



FROM THE CHIEF OF RESEARCH



We are happy to announce that the new Clinical Trial Center (CTC) opened on September 15th! This project has been years in the making, and provides a modern and efficient environment that will optimize the research experience for Veterans and research personnel. Stay tuned for a future announcement of an open house for the CTC, or if you can't wait that long reach out to Laura Dixon (see below). For guidance on conducting VA research, please visit our [webpage](#). -David Clark, Associate Chief of Staff for Research

FEATURED INVESTIGATOR



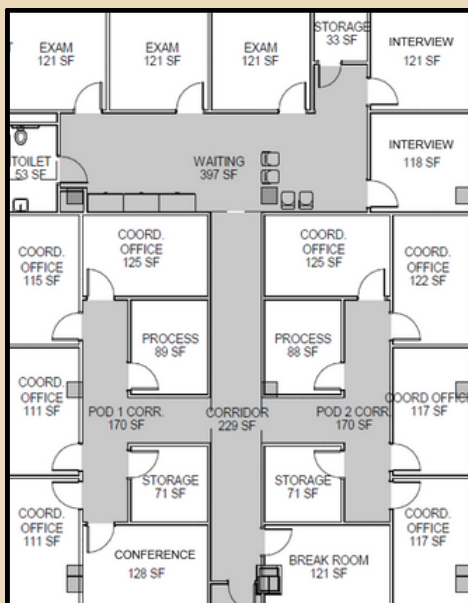
Carsten Schmalfuss, MD is the Chief, Section of Cardiology at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center and Clinical Associate Professor in the UF Department of Cardiology. He also holds a courtesy appointment with the UF Department of Radiology. Dr. Schmalfuss received his MD from the University of Essen, Germany in 1991. He completed a 2-year residency in Cardio-Thoracic Surgery and a year of Cardiology fellowship before coming to the United States in 1995. Here he completed his internship, residency and fellowship in Cardiology at Shands at the University of Florida. He works closely with our Clinical Trial Center, serving as site Principal Investigator for VA trials of congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease. His primary interest is noninvasive cardiac imaging, particularly the use of CT and MRI. He is also involved in several pilot projects using telemedicine in outpatient cardiac care of Veterans. Dr. Schmalfuss is a scientific board member of the VA Central IRB and Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, the Society of Cardiac MR, and the Society of Cardiac CT.

FEATURED RESEARCH STAFF



Laura Dixon, BSN, BS is a Health Science Specialist with the VA non-profit North Florida Foundation for Research and Education (NFFRE) at Malcom Randall VAMC. She began working with NFFRE and Research Service in 2021 during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. She holds bachelor's degrees in both Nursing and Biology from UF—Go Gators! Laura has worked across a wide range of industry-sponsored and grant-funded studies, collaborating with investigators in cardiology, pulmonary medicine, infectious disease, and gastroenterology. She is skilled in navigating the fast-paced, ever-changing world of clinical research. Today she serves as the Clinical Research Manager for NFFRE, where she directs the Clinical Trial Center (see below). Laura is experienced in writing cooperative research and development agreements (CRADA), budget negotiations, and managing diverse study portfolios. She also manages a talented team of health science specialists and research assistants, supporting them the way she supports investigators: with equal parts knowledge, problem-solving, and encouragement. Whether it's untangling the details of a CRADA or guiding a study from start-up through closeout, Laura enjoys helping PIs and study staff feel confident at every step of the process.

CLINICAL TRIAL CENTER



The Clinical Trial Center facility is 3,152 square feet, and includes office space for 15 coordinators, 3 patient exam rooms, a patient waiting area with bathroom, 3 storage rooms, 2 sample processing rooms, break room, and a small conference room. It is staffed by registered nurse and non-nurse clinical research coordinators who take part in ongoing industry training. They are well-versed in the application of Good Clinical Practice and U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines. The CTC currently hosts over 30 studies, primarily administered by NFFRE and funded by VA, NIH, and DOD, as well as industry and private sponsors such as AstraZeneca, Abbvie, Novartis, SWOG, and many more. Recent milestones or accomplishments include:

- Enrolled 100th patient in PREVENTABLE, one of the largest US studies of older adults. The goal of the study is to learn if taking a statin (cholesterol lowering drug) can help prevent dementia, disability, and/or heart disease.
- Third highest enrolling site for the Johnson & Johnson SARS-CoV-2, enrolling over 100 veterans and private citizens.
- Award for dedication in enrolling participants to the SPRINT Trial, which studies how lowering systolic blood pressure affects the cardiovascular system, kidneys, and brain.
- Award for dedication in enrolling participants to the Million Veteran Program (MVP), which is one of the largest health research programs in the world. The program focuses on how genes, lifestyle choices, military experiences, and environmental exposures influence health and wellness among veterans.

We look forward to many more success stories in the new Clinical Trial Center!

VA RESEARCH SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

Clinical Studies

115

Human subject and
medical record research



Proportion of Clinical and
Preclinical Research Studies

Preclinical Studies

25

Animal and bench research

Principal Investigators

53

With active projects

Research Staff and Administrative Staff

40

Research Affiliates

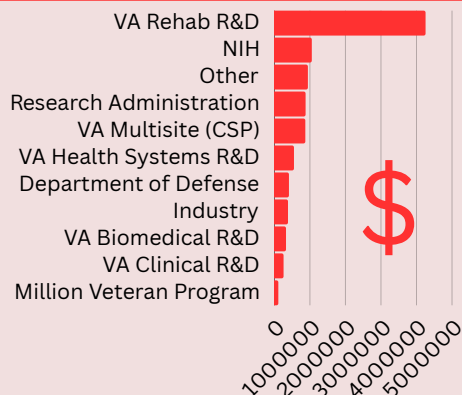
134

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

27

FY25, Year to Date

Research Space: Square Feet

28,595

Research Space: # Rooms

167

Research Equipment

1,504

Pieces of equipment