

SEPTEMBER
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NORTH FLORIDA/SOUTH GEORGIA VETERANS HEALTH SYSTEM

VA Research Newsletter



FROM THE CHIEF OF RESEARCH



2025 marks the 100-year anniversary of research in the US Department of Veterans Affairs! A historical summary of accomplishments are at [this page](#), and I've included a sampling of excerpts below. Momentum is building toward our annual Research Day event on November 6th, where we will showcase the local scientists who are building on this amazing legacy. Submissions for talks and posters from VA scientists are being accepted now. For guidance on conducting VA research, please visit our [webpage](#). *-David Clark, Associate Chief of Staff for Research*

FEATURED INVESTIGATOR



Dana Otzel PhD, ATC, LAT is a scientist with the Brain Rehabilitation Research Center (BRRC) of the NF/SGVHS. She earned her bachelor's degree in Athletic Training from Stetson University and her master's and PhD in Biomechanics from UF before joining Malcolm Randall VAMC in 2013 as a research fellow in the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC). She has been awarded two VA Career Development Awards, with the objective of studying bone health and neuromuscular function after spinal cord injury, both in human patients and in animal models. She has conducted interventions of testosterone replacement therapy (TRT), as well as TRT combined with locomotor training, to address bone, muscle, and neural impairments and to improve walking function. This has yielded a translational bench-to-bedside research program. Dr. Otzel directs the Preclinical Musculoskeletal Imaging Core of the BRRC which provides high resolution imaging of bone microarchitecture, whole-body and region-specific composition (fat, fat-free mass, and bone mineral density), soft-tissue (e.g. muscle) cross sectional area, and vascular morphology on research animals. These measurements are obtained with state-of-the-art microCT and DEXA systems. She welcomes collaboration with VA and academic scientists!

FEATURED RESEARCH STAFF



Paige Webb is the Research and Development Committee Manager. She began her career in VA research in 2016 as a Regulatory Assistant with the North Florida Foundation for Research and Education (NFFRE), where she was responsible for the preparation and submission of new studies, revisions, continuing reviews, and study closures. During her time with NFFRE, she learned invaluable skills that have translated to Research Service process improvements. She joined Research Service in 2023 as a Research Committee Manager, where she focuses on coordinating the Research and Development Committee and the Human Research Protection Program. She is responsible for the administrative review of new study submissions, and acts as a subject matter expert on regulatory requirements of human subjects research, including industry sponsored and multi-site trials. If you visit her office, you'll find evidence that she's a big fan of Marvel, DC, and Star Wars.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF VA RESEARCH

100 years ago in 1925, the Veterans Bureau initiated the first hospital-based medical research studies to address Veteran-specific issues. VA research has made significant medical breakthroughs, impacting the world. Here are some highlights:

1945 - California - Dr. Ernest Bors, an early pioneer in spinal cord injury research, was one of the doctors who helped popularize recreational treatments, including wheelchair basketball, for paralyzed veterans.

1950s - Texas - Dr. Michael DeBakey pioneered new cardiovascular surgical techniques that revolutionized the treatment of stroke patients and lowered cardiovascular mortality rates.

1956 - California - Dr. Edward Shneidman and Dr. Norman Farberow conducted one of the earliest studies on Veteran suicide. What was once regarded as a taboo topic became recognized as a vital public health threat.

1960 - New York - Drs. William Chardack, Andrew Gage, and Wilson Greatbatch invent and use the implantable cardiac pacemaker, which transformed the field of cardiac medicine.

1960 - California - William Oldendorf conducted research that laid the groundwork for the MRI scan and the CT scan. The two medical imaging techniques are among the major scientific advancements of the 20th century.

1964 - Washington DC - Dr. Edward Fries conducted a landmark study on medication for high blood pressure.

1964 - Virginia - Dr. Oscar Auerbach studied changes in lung tissue to prove that cigarette smoke led to cancer.

1967 - Colorado - Dr. Thomas Starzl performed the first successful human liver transplant. His decades of pioneering work brought the experimental procedure into the medical mainstream by the early 1980s.

1977 - New York - Dr. Rosalyn Yalow developed a groundbreaking scientific technique called radioimmunoassay, to follow how antigens reacted with antibodies. This work led to a Nobel Prize in Medicine.

1977 - Louisiana - Dr. Andrew Schally's research on peptide hormone in the brain led to advancements in treatment for prostate cancer, contraception, diabetes, and depression. This work led to a Nobel Prize in Medicine.

1984 - California - The nicotine patch was invented by researchers at the VA and UCLA.

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

42

Research Affiliates

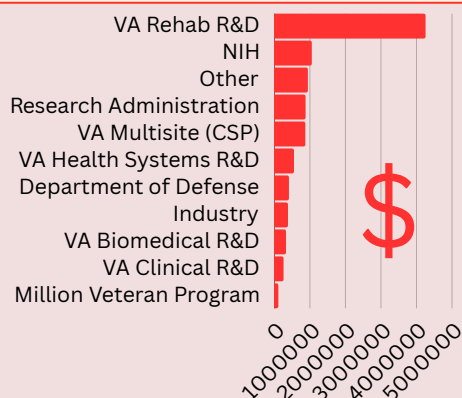
132

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

29,843

Research Space: # Rooms

158

Research Equipment

1,516

Pieces of equipment