

REHABILITATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive announces programmatic changes in the Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D).
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This revised Directive broadens the previous version by adding procedures for the Research Enhancement Award Program and the Rehabilitation Research Disability Supplement.
- 3. RELATED DOCUMENTS.** VHA Handbook 1200.4.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** The Office of Research and Development (12) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to 202-254-0196.
- 5. RESCISSION.** VHA Directive 1203, dated March 19, 2002, is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION.** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of July 2013.

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1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides policy for programs of the Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D), and serves as a guide to additional sources for program-specific information and procedures.

2. BACKGROUND

a. The RR&D in VHA is an intramural program administered by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) and conducted at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities nationwide (see VHA Directive 1200).

b. RR&D's mission is to discover new knowledge to advance optimal rehabilitative health care for veterans with disabilities, and to create innovations that improve the health and rehabilitative care of veterans and the Nation. In support of this mission, RR&D strives to:

(1) Sustain a superior environment of inquiry conducive to the highest quality research, education, and patient care.

(2) Integrate effectively pre-clinical, clinical, and applied research to meet the rehabilitative health care needs of veterans.

(3) Effectively transfer research results into practice in order to advance the rehabilitative health care of veterans.

(4) Capitalize on VHA's value as a national research asset.

(5) Lead and manage an effective and efficient rehabilitation research enterprise.

(6) Increase awareness and understanding of VHA's research contributions in the field of rehabilitation.

c. Values guiding all RR&D efforts include: scientific excellence, the ethical conduct of research, protection of human subjects, and animal welfare. The RR&D program spans the continuum from pre-clinical research through the translation of research into rehabilitative health care practice, emphasizing the health concerns of veterans.

d. Unlike agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Defense, VA does not have the statutory authority to make research grants to colleges and universities, cities and states, or any other non-VA entities. Contracts may be utilized to obtain special services not available in VA (see VHA Handbook 1200.2).

e. VA investigators may obtain funding support for their research from extramural sources, such as: other Federal agencies, private voluntary health organizations and foundations, as well as commercial entities.

f. Letters of Intent (LOI) or research proposals received by RR&D that are determined to be more appropriate for review by another ORD Service may be transferred to that ORD Service to ensure adequate peer review. The ORD Service accepting review responsibility must notify the applicant. The LOI or research proposal must be reviewed in accordance with procedures applicable to the reviewing Service.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that ORD allocate appropriated research funds to VA medical facilities for scientifically meritorious research related to the high priority health care needs of veterans to be conducted by VA employees. *NOTE: The requirements of any policies and operational procedures formulated in conjunction with this VHA Directive apply to all RR&D activities conducted at VA facilities and/or by VA investigators, whether funded by VA or by other sources, or unfunded.*

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO).** The CRADO is responsible for the overall policy, planning, coordination, and direction of all Research and Development (R&D) activities within VHA (see VHA Dir 1200).

b. **Director, RR&D.** The Director, RR&D, is responsible to the CRADO for developing, administering, and coordinating a rehabilitation research program that provides new knowledge to advance optimal rehabilitation health care for veterans and to develop novel approaches to restore them to full and productive lives.

c. **Facility Director.** The facility Director is responsible for ensuring the R&D Committee, the Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for R&D or Coordinator for R&D (C for R&D), Administrative Officer (AO) for R&D, and the Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) follow the policies defined in VHA Handbook 1200.1.

5. DEFINITIONS OF RR&D PROGRAMS

a. **Merit Review Program.** The RR&D Investigator Initiated Research (IIR) Merit Review Program is the principal mechanism for competitive funding of VA rehabilitation research (see VHA Handbook 1203.).

b. **Career Development Program.** The fundamental objective of the RR&D Research Career Development (RCD) Program is to attract, develop, and retain talented researchers to build capacity for VA to conduct research in areas of high relevance to the VHA health care system in fulfillment of its primary mission of patient care, supported by appropriate research and education (see VHA Handbook 1203.2).

c. **Research Career Scientist (RCS) Program.** The RR&D RCS Program is intended to provide recognition and research support for non-clinician scientists in VA. Non-clinician scientists contribute to VA research programs not only because of their direct contributions to scientific knowledge, but because they serve as mentors for clinician and non-clinician investigators. They provide an important expertise that complements the research programs of the clinical staff (see VHA Handbook 1203.3).

d. **RR&D Centers.** RR&D Centers are established in VA health care facilities to conduct R&D in areas of special relevance to the rehabilitative health care needs of veterans. RR&D Centers are intended to be a resource, first, for the veterans served by VA and, second, for the rehabilitation community at large. They are expected to provide cutting edge solutions to the issues of chronic impairment. It is anticipated that Centers will establish and cultivate a community of VA clinical scientists and scholars within the VA health care system for the purpose of pursuing specific research objectives in accordance with a well-reasoned 5-year plan (see VHA Handbook 1203.4).

e. **Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP).** The goal of this program is to increase RR&D capacity by assisting VA sites that already show promise, as demonstrated by a history of RR&D peer reviewed research and career development funding. Funds provided under this program are for maintaining or creating a core program of investigators to support and facilitate the development of RR&D research projects and the training and mentoring of new RR&D investigators.

f. **RR&D Disability Supplement.** The RR&D disability supplement program is intended to assist qualify people with disabilities to participate in RR&D sponsored research programs. The program is open to all principal investigators with current RR&D Merit Review, RR&D centers or REAPS funding.

g. **The Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development (JRRD).** JRRD, a peer-reviewed publication of VA RR&D Service, is an indexed, scientific journal offering comprehensive coverage of all rehabilitation research disciplines. VA constituents and the disabled community at large, look to the JRRD to disseminate effective new rehabilitation discoveries to clinicians, researchers and consumers. JRRD accepts papers from both VA and non-VA investigators, and its editors frequently receive manuscripts from international sources (see VHA Handbook 1203.5).

h. **Magnuson Award.** Paul B. Magnuson, M.D., was a bone and joint surgeon who continuously sought new treatments and devices for assisting his patients as they faced unique situations presented by their disability. The Magnuson award was established in 1998 in recognition of the importance of rehabilitation research within the VA health care system. It is the highest honor for VA rehabilitation investigators. The award is presented annually to a VA RR&D investigator who exemplifies the entrepreneurship, humanitarianism, and dedication to veterans displayed by Dr. Magnuson during his career. The award is presented at an appropriate scientific meeting or event (see VHA Handbook 1203.06).