

Session Objectives 

- By the end of this session, learners will:
 - Have an understanding of VA funding opportunities and procedures for including VA patients in their studies
 - Be able to identify special considerations for engaging Veterans as stakeholders in research



Research at the Madison VA

Madison VA Research Service - Mission

To provide comprehensive, superior-quality services and facilities that support VA investigators and advance their basic and applied research while adhering to the highest scientific, ethical, and regulatory standards.

VISION

- Promote and facilitate innovation/discovery and disseminate health care research for Veterans and the nation
- Acquire, develop, and retain world-class leaders in research
- Foster and ensure a culture of professionalism and integrity

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

Madison VA Research Service - Structure

- **Research Space**
 - Over 37,000 square feet of lab and office space
 - An AAALAC-accredited animal research facility
- **Research Support**
 - 11 administrative staff to support investigators in all stages of their research projects
 - Grant advising
 - Grant review
 - Grant submission
 - Hiring
 - Post-award grant management
 - Protocol management (IACUC, Safety, R&D)
 - Purchasing
 - Training
 - Work orders

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

Madison VA Research Service - Structure

- **Researchers**
 - Approximately 60 active primary investigators performing over 120 research projects
 - 55% of investigators also provide direct patient care
 - Most investigators have a joint appointment with the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

VA-Funded Research Portfolio

- VA Research focuses on Veterans' needs
- VA funding is reserved for studies that promise to have a significant impact on Veterans' healthcare and/or quality of life

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

Madison VA Research Areas

Infectious disease	Epilepsy & Parkinson's disease
Mental health PTSD, depression, addiction	Cancer Melanoma, colorectal and brain cancer
Alzheimer's disease	Hearing loss and low vision
Traumatic brain injury	Diabetes
Obstructive lung disease	Patient safety
Aging (GRECC)	Million Veteran Program

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

VA-Funded Research Portfolio

28 investigators with VA funding (in FY16)

34 FY16 VA-funded Projects

- 12 **Biomedical Laboratory R&D** – basic, pre-clinical biomedical and behavioral studies
- 7 **Clinical Science R&D** – interventional, experimental, and/or observational studies involving human subjects
- 2 **Health Services R&D** – studies of the organization, financing, management, and social factors of healthcare and effects on healthcare delivery, quality, cost, etc.
- 2 **Rehabilitation R&D** – basic, translational and clinical studies with the goal of maximizing functional recovery
- 3 **Career Development Awards** – career development program for junior-level investigators
- 5 **Cooperative Studies Programs** – large multi-site studies
- 1 **Office of Nursing Services** – nursing research on high-priority health issues for Veterans with particular emphasis on patient-centered care

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

Madison VA Research – Goals

Fiscal Year	Number of grant submissions
FY13	25
FY14	32
FY15	38
FY16	35

- Increase VA-funding
- Increase submissions, with particular focus on Health Science and Rehab services
- Increase administrative services to support grant submissions
- Increase grant application success by providing editorial and review services
- Attract and retain new investigators

Slide source: Madison VA Research Service

Veteran Engagement at the Madison VA and UW

Patient and Caregiver Stakeholder Board

- Patient and caregiver arm of PCORI Eugene Washington Engagement award (PI: Nasia Safdar)
- Focus is on healthcare-associated infections (HAI) research
- Comprised of mostly older adults from rural WI who have had an HAI, includes Veteran representation
- Recruitment challenging – had to reach out through provider at ID clinic, low response rate



- VA Hospital Research Program provides support and resources for Veteran engagement
 - Developed a Veteran Engagement Toolkit available online
 - Led a workshop in May 2017 “Veteran Engagement in Research: An Interactive Workshop for Researchers”
 - Veteran Engagement Ambassador available for consultations

Engagement Resources



- Toolkit with local resources:
<https://www.hipxchange.org/EngagingVeterans>



Engaging Veterans in Research

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs QUERI
School of Medicine and Public Health Health Innovation Program

Engagement Resources



Video Library
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

May 2017 Veteran Engagement Workshop video capture available at:
<https://videos.med.wisc.edu/videos/76585>

Engagement Resources



- Veteran Engagement Ambassador available to support researchers to:
 - Develop Veteran engagement plan
 - Connect with national Veteran engagement contacts and resources
 - Create effective engagement materials (recruitment flyers/letters, meeting agendas, presentations)
 - Identify and recruit relevant Veteran stakeholders
 - Evaluate quality of engagement with Veterans
- Contact Nicole Brys: nabrys@wisc.edu; 263-7825

Future Directions



- Conduct engagement needs assessment with VA and UW researchers, focusing on clinical trials
- Identify Veteran research priorities
- Cultivate relationships with Veterans with interest in engagement
- Develop long-term plan for sustained Veteran engagement at Madison
- Explore possibility of developing pilot funding for Veteran engagement to strengthen applications for subsequent federal funding from VA

Veteran Engagement at the VA Nationally



HSR&D Veteran Engagement Workgroup

- Created in January 2015 by VA Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) Director
- Goal was to review and recommend how to best incorporate Veteran input and engagement in research
- Ongoing monthly meetings – open to any researcher with a VA affiliation

Veteran Engagement Groups (VEGs)

- Veterans and/or Veteran Stakeholders selected to meet on a regular or ad hoc basis to provide input on the design, implementation, and dissemination of research
- At each meeting, a different investigator introduces their research and asks for feedback
- Several VA Centers of Innovation (COINs) have developed ongoing Veteran Engagement Groups (VEGs) – Portland, Denver, Bedford/Boston

Veteran Engagement Toolkit

- Focuses on developing and facilitating VEGs, but many of the resources relevant to other models of engagement
- Online and PDF version will be available soon on HSR&D website

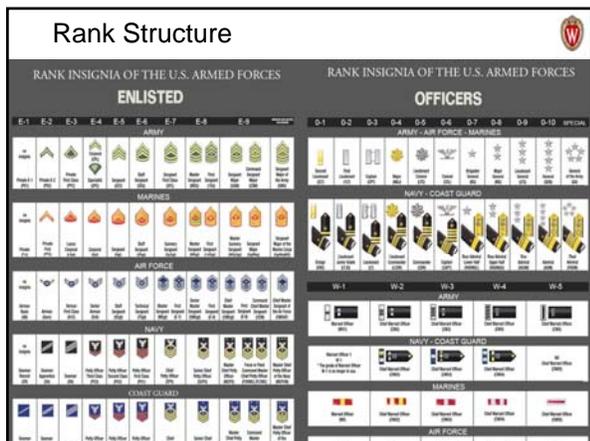
HSR&D Cyberseminars

- Recorded seminars on Veteran engagement available at: <https://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/>
- Topics include:
 - Increasing the Voice of the Veteran in VA Research
 - Growing a VEG
 - Measuring Processes and Impacts of Veteran-Engaged Research
 - Working with Veteran Service Organizations to Improve your Research
 - Strengthening Excellence in Research through Veteran Engagement
 - Engaging Women Veterans in Research

Preparing to Engage Veterans

Military Branches





Training and Career Pipelines

- Enlisted**
 - Forms majority of military members
 - Enlistment requires high school diploma or GED
 - Does not require a four-year (bachelor's) degree
 - Significant proportion join upon or shortly after high-school graduation
 - Eligibility to enlist at the age of 17 with parental permission
 - May pursue opportunities to become commissioned officers or warrant officers
- Commissioned Officers**
 - Requires four-year (bachelor's) degree
 - Congressional approval required for commission
 - Commissions earned through attendance of a service academy, participation in a collegiate ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) program, or completion of an OCS (Officer Candidate School) session after a four-year degree has been earned
 - Service Academies:
 - West Point (Army)
 - Annapolis (Navy and Marine Corps)
 - Colorado Springs (Air Force)
 - New London, Connecticut (Coast Guard)
 - Kings Point, New York (Merchant Marine)

What the Military is Like (In a Nutshell)

- Accurate Perceptions**
 - Highly regimented and restrictive (relative to most civilian environments)
 - Formal titles and addressing etiquette
 - Mentally and physically strenuous, competitive
 - High degree of conformity
 - Often fraternal and familial, can be exclusive, "cliquey"
 - Pride in history and legacy
 - Abrasive humor very common
 - Some careerists only self-concerned, many are not
 - Very aware of/concerned with retention and sustainment
 - Sterile atmospheres
 - Usually meritocratic (qualifications and ability dominant), some nepotism/favoritism
 - Austere environments and rudimentary living conditions during training exercises and on deployment
 - For many members, English is a second language
 - Many first and second generation American citizens
 - High divorce and breakup rates
 - Significantly patriotic, but not overwhelmingly so
 - Immersed in a work environment and population highly saturated by "young" individuals (a majority usually 18-40)

Issues Specific to Conflict Eras/Generations

- Ability to anticipate danger/combat in conventional warfare vs sudden exposure in combatting insurgencies and guerillas
- Public reception of military members upon return from conflict zone
- Relatively chivalrous conduct between belligerents (including treatment of non-combatants)-with the exception of Pacific theater of WWII and numerous incidents on Korean peninsula in early 1950s-during conventional, older conflicts vs. recent conflicts
- Vietnam-Cancer diagnoses related to Agent Orange exposure, recognition and awareness of PTSD
- Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield-Gulf War Syndrome/Illness
- GWOT- "Burn Pit" (respiratory issues), TBI, PTSD

Common Acronyms and Selected Terminology

- **AO**=Area of Operation
- **COIN**=Counter Insurgency
- **SASO**=Support And Stability Operations
- **Stationed**=state of having a permanent/semi-permanent presence at one facility, installation, ship, or complex (i.e. Navy personnel stationed at a port). Duty station assignment durations range from months to an entire enlistment (multiple years).
- **Deployment**=temporary presence in a country, region, or body of water.
- **"Pump(s)"**=deployment(s)
- **"In-Country"**=state of being in a host nation or state that is a combat zone
- **"Down-Range"**- state of being in a combat zone
- **Rotation**-can apply to either a deployment to a place or state of being stationed somewhere.
- **Tour(s)**=deployment(s)
- **"Workup"**-total training preparation for deployment, can last from as much as a year and a half to as little as a few months.
- **Enlistment/Commission**=aggregate duration of service (in years). Individual increments of 4-6 years.

Transition Between Eras

- Individual rotational basis: WWII through Vietnam.
- Unit deployment and retrograde: Grenada-Present.
- Continuous troop presence in Japan (primarily Navy, Marines, and Air Force), Germany (primarily Army and Air Force), and Italy (primarily Army and Navy) since 1945.
- Continuous troop presence in Korea since 1950.
- No draft since 1973.
- United States military has found itself "peacekeeping" almost as much as conducting confrontational offensive combat operations since the end of the "Cold War" in 1991(e.g. Somalia, Liberia, and the former Yugoslavia in the early, mid, and late 1990s through the early 2000s).
- Progressively restricting rules of engagement (ROEs) during current era.

Post-9/11 / Global War On Terror (GWOT) Campaigns 

- **Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)**-efforts against the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and their allies. Primarily Afghanistan, but also smaller engagements in Pakistan, the Philippines, and the Horn of Africa (October 2001-December 2014).
- **Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS)**-efforts against the Taliban and IS-"Khorasan Province." Afghanistan (December 2014-present).
- **Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)**-(March 2003-September 2010)
- **Operation New Dawn (OND)**-Iraq (September 2010-December 2011)
- **Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR)**-efforts against ISIS/ISIL. Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea (June 2014-present)

Post-9/11 / GWOT Deployment Durations 

- **Army**-typically 9-15 months w/ 1 month R&R (rest and relaxation)
- **Air Force**-usually 12 months
- **Navy**-typically 6-10 months if on ship, 6 months on sub, 6-7 months if w/ Marines
- **Marine Corps**-usually 6-7 months w/ no R&R
- **Special Operations Forces-USSOCOM/JSOC** – variable
 - Navy SEALs
 - Army Special Forces/Green Berets/ODA and CAG/Delta Force
 - Marine Corps Raiders
 - Air Force Para-Rescue Jumpers and Combat Controllers
 - Army Rangers
 - Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) attachments

Types of post-9/11 / GWOT Deployments 

- **Combat deployment** – active war zones where American personnel and property are directly/indirectly targeted, does not require a declaration of war
- Multiple capacities-conventional, force-protection and security, or train, advise, mentor, and assist developing militaries and law enforcement
- Current era locations-Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Niger, occasionally Egyptian Sinai and parts of the Philippines.
- OIF Surge-166,300 (October 2007)
- OEF Surge-approx. 100,000 (August 2010-June 2011)
- **Non-combat deployments** –

One example is the **Marine Expeditionary Unit** - present in every major body of water (sometimes becomes a combat deployment)-usually training only, bilateral and multi-lateral training exercises, may conduct anti-piracy operations, frequently provides humanitarian assistance domestically and globally, or American civilian and Department of State embassy personnel evacuations from other countries as crisis response.

- 1.3 million active duty service members, approx. 450,000 currently overseas (stationed and/or deployed), 25,000 to combat zones

Environments



- **WWII**-every environment imaginable
- **American Occupation of China (Operation Beleaguer)**-urban, semi-urban, and rural
- **Korea**-urban and rural, mountainous
- **Dominican Republic**-rural and urban/semi-urban
- **Vietnam (Laos, Cambodia)**-mostly rural (villages/agrarian), jungle, some urban engagements, humid, hot temperatures
- **Grenada**-urban and semi-urban, small island
- **Lebanon (Beirut)**-urban
- **Panama**-rural, semi-urban, urban
- **Gulf War (Desert Storm/Shield)**-arid desert, limited urban engagements
- **Somalia**-mostly semi-urban and urban
- **Haiti**-rural and semi-urban
- **Balkans (former Yugoslavia)**-rural, urban, and semi-urban
- **Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn/Inherent Resolve**-mostly urban, arid desert, very hot during summer months
- **Operation Enduring Freedom/Freedom's Sentinel**-mostly rural (villages/agrarian), frequently mountainous, some semi-urban, semi-arid deserts, hot during summer months

Civilian Stereotypes and Bias



- **Incorrect Stereotypes**
 - Constant yelling
 - Individuals are transformed into "mindless" machines
 - Military comprised of non-intellectuals
 - Rampant racism
 - Marching is a dominant means of transportation
 - All military service members deploy
 - Most deployed service members see combat
 - Individuals are immersed in combat a vast majority of the time while in a combat zone
 - Most, if not all combat veterans have PTSD
 - Most, if not all veterans with PTSD can't be around loud noises (fireworks, firearms, etc.)
 - Military members and veterans love war movies
 - Many combat veterans are dangers to society
 - Most, if not all military members and veterans think condescendingly of civilians
- **Crucial Warnings**
 - Individuals engaged in acts of stolen valor that have not been exposed give the civilian populace a false perception of veterans and military members and thus a bad reputation

Phrasing/Terminology and Questions to Utilize or Avoid



- Survey vs. questionnaire
 - Service-member, military member
 - Questions and statements involving politics ("both sides of aisle")
 - Questions involving exposure to or application of violence (personal)
- When asking questions, be direct-with most military members and veterans, you can be blunt, just don't assume anything about them.

Evaluation Link 

Please complete the evaluation for this breakout:
<https://go.wisc.edu/fa7hqz>
