

FRIENDS OF VA MEDICAL CARE AND HEALTH RESEARCH

A BUDGET
PROPOSAL
FOR FY 2020



About FOVA

Over thirty years ago, the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) coalition was founded to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care.

Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing nearly 90 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations.

FOVA organizations work in concert with the *Independent Budget* veterans service organizations to advocate for continued, necessary funding for the research and health programs that serve the nation's veterans.

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Why Do Veterans Need a VA-Based Research Program?

VA research improves veterans' health care

Investigating a Veteran-Centric Comprehensive Research Portfolio

Research at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) focuses on veteran-unique conditions in four main areas: biomedical, clinical science, health services, and rehabilitation. All research proposals must affect veterans' health.

Collaborating with Partners to Leverage Taxpayers' Investment

The VA has established nationwide partnerships with the NIH and other federal research agencies, for-profit medical industry companies, nonprofit organizations, and academic affiliates to maximize and augment its research capabilities.

Supporting the Next Generation of Veterans' Health Researchers

By offering mentored research opportunities, the VA attracts, develops, and retains talented postdoctoral researchers in clinical, translational, and basic science disciplines.

Recruiting and Retaining Clinicians to Care for Veterans

Because the VA awards grants only to VA employees, the VA uses a dedicated funding source to attract high-quality physicians and clinical investigators to the VA health care system and retain them.

Fostering Excellence in Veterans' Health Research

VA researchers have received three Nobel Prizes in physiology or medicine, seven Albert Lasker Medical Research Awards ("America's Nobels"), and numerous other distinctions that drive innovations in VA health care.

Helping Veterans: Bench to Bedside

Seventy percent of VA researchers are clinicians who also provide direct care to veterans and, as a result, have developed a cultural competency for the unique needs of veteran patients.

FOVA FY 2020 Recommendation: VA Medical and Prosthetic Research

\$840 million

Funding for VA research must be predictable and sustained to meet ongoing commitments while allowing for innovative scientific growth to address critical emerging needs in the veteran community.

Addressing Growing Health Care Needs While Supporting Long-Term Investments

In line with past budget requests and report language, FOVA believes that Congress should appropriate additional funding in fiscal year (FY) 2020 for expanded research on both emerging and chronic conditions, as well as for groundbreaking research programs at the forefront of personalized medicine.

The VA is uniquely positioned to advance genomic medicine through the Million Veteran Program (MVP):

- It is currently the world's largest genomic database connected to one health care system. When completed, it will offer tremendous potential to study and enhance the health of all veterans.
- This effort seeks to collect biological samples and general health information from 1 million veterans by 2021. To date, more than 750,000 veterans have enrolled in MVP.
- Although MVP has tremendous translational and clinical potential, funding for the program should not detract from other critical VA research priorities.

Additional funding will help the VA support its new research priority areas, including:

- Postdeployment mental health concerns, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- New engineering and technological methods to improve the lives of veterans with prosthetic systems or to activate paralyzed nerves, muscles, and limbs.
- Chronic pain abatement through alternatives to opioids such as new, safer medications and nonprescription strategies.

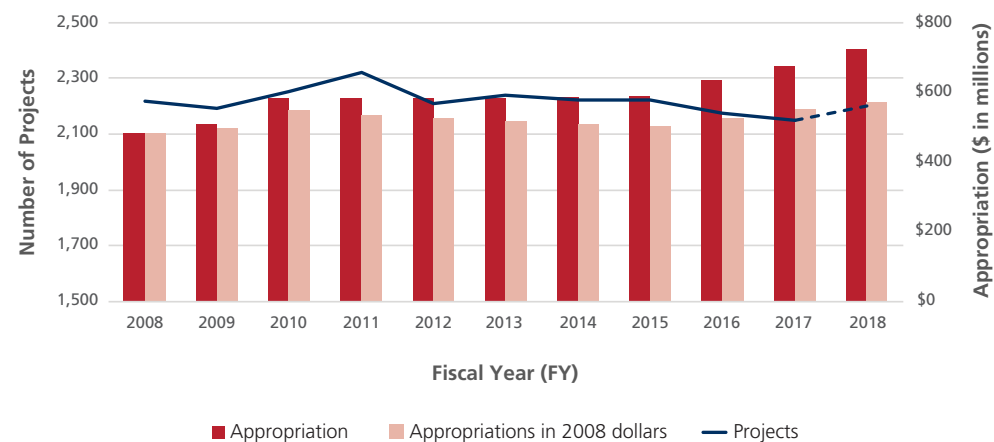
FOVA believes that other critically underfunded areas should be maintained to expand research in areas affecting the entire, diverse veteran community, including:

- The gender-specific health care needs of the VA's growing population of women veterans.
- Studies dedicated to understanding chronic multisymptom illnesses among Gulf War veterans and the long-term health effects of exposures to potentially hazardous substances.
- Innovative health services strategies, such as telehealth and self-directed care, that lead to accessible, high-quality, cost-effective care for all veterans.

Sustaining Investments in Veteran Research — The Toll of Biomedical Inflation

Despite numerous successes in research and innovation, appropriated funding for VA research and development has lagged behind biomedical research inflation since FY 2010, resulting in stagnant VA purchasing power. The Biomedical Research and Development Price Index (BRDPI), as projected by the Department of Commerce and the National Institutes of Health, estimates that the Medical and Prosthetic Research appropriation should be increased in FY 2020 by 2.8% over the FY 2019 baseline — about \$22 million — for VA research simply to maintain current research levels. FOVA recommends meaningful growth above inflation for FY 2020 in order to build on momentum of recent years and to allow the VA to support promising research proposals in all disciplines to better the health of all veterans.

VA Research Program - Projects and Funding



Congressionally Directed VA Research

Both FOVA and the *Independent Budget* veterans service organizations strongly believe that all decisions regarding the selection of individual research projects and their funding should be made through the VA peer-review process. Therefore, funding for any potential congressionally mandated VA research is not included in the *Independent Budget* or FOVA recommendations. FOVA believes that any such directed research, if so desired by Congress, warrants a separate appropriation.

FOVA FY 2020 Recommendation: VA Research Facilities Improvement

\$225 million

Major construction: \$50 million

Nonrecurring maintenance and minor construction: \$175 million












Addressing Shortfalls in VA Research Infrastructure Funding

State-of-the-art research requires an investment not only in state-of-the-art technology and equipment, but also in facilities. For decades, VA construction and maintenance appropriations have failed to provide the resources the VA needs to replace, maintain, or upgrade its aging research facilities. The impact of this funding shortage was observed in a congressionally mandated report published in 2012 that found a clear need for research infrastructure improvements systemwide. The VA recently completed Phase II of the assessment, and preliminary findings show that not all projects identified in the 2012 report have received funding, that few facilities have seen significant improvement, and that renovations can lead to significant benefits, including increased collaborations and potential to increase research funding.

The Phase II report indicates that the process to apply for and receive funding for construction projects has focused more on clinical spaces and is transitioning to reside under the purview of the Veterans Health Administration through individual Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs). FOVA believes that designating funds for specific VA research facilities is the only way to bring VA research up to standard. For capital infrastructure, renovations, and maintenance, FOVA recommends at least \$50 million for up to five major construction projects in VA research facilities and \$175 million in nonrecurring maintenance and minor construction funding to address deficiencies identified in the congressionally requested report on the status of VA research facilities (H.R. Rep. No. 109-95, H.R. Rep. No. 111-559). FOVA encourages Congress to request information about the updated report from the VA to guide its funding decisions. A copy of the VA's 2012 report is available at aamc.org/varpt.

Improving Veterans' Lives Through Innovation and Discovery

For more than 90 years, the VA Research & Development Program has been improving veterans' lives through innovation and discovery that has led to advances in health care for veterans and all Americans.

- 1925**  Launch of the VA Research & Development Program with the first hospital-based research study
- 1961**  Established concepts leading to the development of the CAT scan
- 1984**  Developed the nicotine patch and other smoking cessation therapies
- 1994**  Linked aspirin to a reduced rate of heart attacks
- 2010**  Collaborated with U.S. Army to study suicide prevention in active service members and veterans
- 2019**  Enrolled 750,000th volunteer in the Million Veteran Program
- 1960**  Invented the implantable cardiac pacemaker
- 1967**  Conducted first successful liver transplant; developed methods to prevent rejection of transplanted organs
- 1991**  Developed functional electronic stimulation to aid in moving paralyzed limbs
- 2007**  Revealed the first powered ankle-foot prosthesis, which propels users forward
- 2015**  Invented a "standing" wheelchair that provides greater independence

Organizations Endorsing the FOVA FY 2020 Recommendations

American Association of Directors of Psychiatric
Residency Training

AcademyHealth

American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine

Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine

American Academy of Neurology

American Academy of Ophthalmology

American Academy of Pain Medicine

American Academy of Physical Medicine
and Rehabilitation

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases

American Association of Chairs of Departments
of Psychiatry

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Association of Neuromuscular
& Electromyography Medicine

American Brain Coalition

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American College of Physicians

American Dental Education Association

American Gastroenterological Association

American Geriatrics Society

American Heart Association

American Liver Foundation

American Organization of Nurse Executives

American Osteopathic Association

American Pain Society

American Physical Therapy Association

American Physiological Society

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

American Society for Bone and Mineral Research

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

American Society of Nephrology

American Thoracic Society

American Tinnitus Association

AMVETS

Arthritis Foundation

American Spinal Injury Association

Association for Clinical and Translational Science

Association for Prevention Teaching and Research

Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology

Association for Surgical Education

Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries

Association of Academic Physiatrists

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of Departments of Family Medicine

Association of Minority Health Professions Schools

Association of University Anesthesiologists

Association of University Professors of Neurology

Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology

Blinded Veterans Association

Catholic War Veterans of the United States of America

Clinical Research Forum

Coalition for Clinical and Translational Science

Digestive Disease National Coalition

Disabled American Veterans

Dystonia Advocacy Network

Dystonia Medical Research Foundation

Endocrine Society

Epilepsy Foundation

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

GBS/CIDP Foundation International

International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders

Interstitial Cystitis Association

LUNGevery Foundation

Lymphatic Education & Research Network

Military Order of the Purple Heart

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research

National Alopecia Areata Foundation

National Association for the Advancement
of Orthotics and Prosthetics

National Association for Biomedical Research

National Association of VA Dermatologists

National Association of Veterans' Research
and Education Foundations

NephCure Kidney International

North American Primary Care Research Group

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Polish Legion of American Veterans

Pulmonary Hypertension Association

Scleroderma Foundation

Sleep Research Society

Society of Academic Associations of Anesthesiology
and Perioperative Medicine

Society of General Internal Medicine

Society of Teachers of Family Medicine

University of Minnesota

Veterans of Foreign Wars

VeteransAgainstAlzheimer's



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