

Presentation 8 – Joel Kupersmith

# Gulf War Update



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## VA Research

**Our mission is clear and Congressionally-  
mandated :**

*“To discover knowledge and create innovations  
that advance the health and care of veterans and  
the nation.”*



## **VA Research Standards**

- **Is the research based on rigorous science?**
- **Will the research produce data that will drive clinical policy?**
- **Will the research translate to improved health care?**
- **Will the research help veterans?**



**How VA Research Works**



## **Intramural Research Program**

- **VA Research is an intramural program.**
- **Researchers must be employed by VA (5/8s or more in most cases).**
- **Unlike agencies such as the NIH or DoD, VA has no statutory authority to make research grants to colleges and universities, cities and states, or any other non-VA entity.**



## **Organization of VA Research**

- **Four research services with the VA Office of Research and Development (ORD)**
  - **Biomedical Laboratory R&D Service (BLR&D)**
  - **Clinical Science R&D Service (CSR&D)**
  - **Health Services R&D Service (HSR&D)**
  - **Rehabilitation R&D Service (RR&D)**



## Types of Research Sponsored

- Investigator-Initiated Research (Merit Review)
- Mentored Research (Career Development)
- Large-scale, multi-site clinical trials (Cooperative Studies Program)
- Centers of Excellence (all Services)
- Service-Directed Research
- Special Initiatives (e.g., Gulf War Illnesses Research)



## Merit Review

- Merit Review
  - Our core business
  - Must produce excellent science
  - Process must be sacrosanct
  - Must be absolutely fair (especially in view of history)
  - Must have uniformity in procedures
  - New initiative - NIH eRAs Computerized system
    - ✓ Will revolutionize system and also promote uniformity



## Current ORD Leadership

- **CRADO**                      **Joel Kupersmith**
- **Deputy CRADO**      **Joe Francis (acting)**
- **Director, BLR&D**      **Timothy O’Leary**
- **Director, CSR&D**      **Timothy O’Leary**
- **Director, RR&D**      **Robert Ruff (acting)**
- **Director, HSR&D**      **Shirley Meehan (acting)**



## Recent Developments



## Merit Review FY2005



### **FY 2005 RFP Merit Review**

- **67 Notifications of intent to submit received**
- **44 Proposals submitted (~66%)**
- **Proposals assigned to 2 Subcommittees**
- **Reviewed on Sept. 16 and Sept. 30**
- **12 Proposals Selected for Funding**
- **Funding expected to begin January 1, 2006**



## Developing an RFP The Vetting Process

- Initial Draft(s) of the RFP
- ORD Concurrence Process → Final Version
- VACO Concurrence Process
- RFP Announcement (E-Mail and Web Site)
- LOI/Notice of Intent to Submit
- Proposal Submission (≥ 60 days)
- Reviewer Recruitment/Review (30-60 days)
- Funding Decisions
- Compliance Documentation (30-60 days)
- Funds Released



## Funded Proposals

- **Exposures**  
(10 submitted)
  - Proteomic Analysis of Cellular Response to Biological Warfare Agents (PB, DEET, permethrin)
  - Direct Delivery of Neurotoxins to the Brain by an Intranasal Route (PB, DEET, permethrin)
  - Behavior of Neural Stem Cells in a Rat Model of GWS (PB, DEET, permethrin)
- **Brain and Nervous System Function**  
(15 submitted)
  - Integrated Neuroimaging and Neuropathological Analysis of the Effects of Physical Activity on Progression and Therapy in ALS
  - Autonomic Functions of Gulf War Veterans with Unexplained Illnesses
  - Motor Neuron Function of Gulf War Veterans with Excessive Fatigue



## Funded Proposals

### ■ Immune Function and Infectious Diseases

(5 submitted)

- Mechanisms of Immune Dysfunction in Gulf War Illness
- The Diagnosis and Pathogenesis of Occult Leishmaniasis

### ■ Symptoms and General Health

(14 submitted)

- Tissue Factor and Gulf War-Associated Chronic Coagulopathies
- Effect of Hyperthermic Exposure on Susceptibility to Experimental Lung Injury
- Profile of GW Veterans who Applied for Undiagnosed Illness Compensation



## Initiatives for FY2006



## **New Initiatives for FY 2006**

- **Gulf War Treatment Research Center RFP**
  - Currently in Concurrence
  - Up to 3 to be selected for July 1 finding
  - \$1 million/year (each center)
  - Collaboration/Pilot Project with UT Southwestern

## **New Initiatives for FY 2006**

- **Brain Bank to include ALS and non-ALS (control)**
- **Genetic risk factors and predispositions**
  - DNA Bank for Gulf War
  - Dr. Kang's samples
    - ✓ Will need re-consent

## **New Initiatives for FY 2006**

- **New Merit Review RFP – Jan or Feb release**
  - **Topic Suggestions from RAC-GWVI**

## **Gulf War Update**



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