

More VA Research opportunities can be seen on the [ORD website](#). Members of the VA Research community who are interested in advertising their available positions here can submit requests to ORD.Web@va.gov.



Noteworthy Publications

Below is a small sampling of noteworthy studies published by VA researchers within the past month. This list is intended to reflect the broad spectrum of VA research, but is in no way inclusive of all VA researcher topics or projects. Visit the [VACO Library](#) website to sign up for alerts on published VA studies on many different topics.

[Comparative effectiveness of BNT162b2 and mRNA-1273 vaccines in U.S. Veterans](#). Dickerman BA, Gerlovin H, Madenci AL, Kurgansky KE, Ferolito BR, Figueroa Muñiz, Gagnon DR et al. The Moderna mRNA vaccine was shown to offer slightly better COVID-19 protection than the Pfizer vaccine, but both vaccines were highly effective at preventing infection, hospitalization, and death. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2021 Dec 1. Online ahead of print.

[Cardiovascular events with finerenone in kidney disease and type 2 diabetes](#). Pitt B, Filippatos G, Agarwal R, Anker SD, Bakris GL, Rossing P, Joseph A et al. Among patients with type 2 diabetes and stage 2 to 4 chronic kidney disease with moderately elevated albuminuria or stage 1 or 2 CKD with severely elevated albuminuria, finerenone therapy improved cardiovascular outcomes as compared with placebo. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2021 Dec 9;385(24):2252-2263.

[Effect of long-term supplementation within marine omega-3 fatty acids vs placebo on risk of depression or clinically relevant depressive symptoms and on change in mood scores: A randomized clinical trial](#). Okereke OI, Vyas CM, Mischoulon D, Chang G, Cook NR, Weinberg A, Bubes V et al. Treatment with omega-3 supplements yielded mixed results. The findings do not support the use of omega-3 supplements in adults to prevent depression. *JAMA*. 2021 Dec 21;326(23):2385-2394.

[Association of rivaroxaban vs apixaban with major ischemic or hemorrhagic events in patients with atrial fibrillation](#). Ray WA, Chung CP, Stein CM, Smalley W, Zimmerman E, Dupont W, Hung AM et al. Among Medicare beneficiaries 65 years and older with atrial fibrillation, treatment with rivaroxaban compared with apixaban was associated with a significantly increased risk of major ischemic or hemorrhagic events. *JAMA*. 2021 Dec 21;326(23):2395-2404.

[Association between preserved ratio impaired spirometry and clinical outcomes in US adults](#). Wan ES, Balte P, Schwartz JE, Bhatt SP, Cassano PA, Couper D, Daviglius ML et al. Baseline PRISm, compared with normal spirometry, was associated with a small but statistically significant increased risk for mortality and adverse cardiovascular and respiratory outcomes. *JAMA*. 2021 Dec 14;26(22):2287-2298.



Media Buzz

Social Media Highlights

On Dec. 9, the main VA Twitter account tweeted to its over 600,000 followers a story about MAPS, a VA-created smartphone app that aims to help prevent Veteran suicide.



[#VAResearchNewsBrief](#): Researchers from the [@VAProvidence](#) developed a smartphone app to help prevent suicide. The Mobile Application for the Prevention of Suicide (MAPS) uses assessment in the moment to identify risk and deliver real-time strategies. bit.ly/3rR4AFu



8:30 AM · Dec 9, 2021 · Salesforce - Social Studio

57 Retweets 10 Quote Tweets 27 Likes

If you would like to submit a post to go on the VA Research Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram pages, please do so via email at ORDMedia@va.gov.

Please include the following information:

- Desired platform: Facebook, Twitter (240 character max), or Instagram
- Post content
- Image

- [Link](#)

After the above are submitted, the request will be forwarded to the ORD Communications team for approval and scheduling. Posts may also be added to a library of potential stories to be picked up by other VA social media accounts, such as the main VA pages.

VA Research in the News

Multiple news outlets reported that researchers with the Concussion Legacy Foundation diagnosed former NFL receiver Vincent Jackson with stage 2 chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). Jackson, who retired in 2018, was found dead in February at the age of 38. CTE is a progressive degenerative brain disease caused by repetitive head trauma. It is linked to aggression, impulsivity, depression, anxiety, paranoia, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and cognitive problems. Dr. Ann McKee, chief of neuropathology at the VA Boston Healthcare System, described how Jackson's life changed as he was affected with these symptoms. McKee is also director of the Boston University CTE Center and VA-BU-CLF Brain Bank. "That his brain showed stage 2 CTE should no longer surprise us; these results have become commonplace. What is surprising is that so many football players have died with CTE and so little is being done to make football, at all levels, safer by limiting the number of repetitive subconcussive hits," said McKee. The researchers hope that the findings of Jackson's case will raise awareness of CTE and the risks of the disease.

This story was reported by *U.S. News & World Report*, *CNN*, *NBC News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *CBS News*, among other outlets.

Research Photo of the Month



(From left) Drs. Lauren Kennedy-Metz and Marco Zenati and chief perfusionist Rithy Srey stand near a heart-lung machine in an operating room at the West Roxbury VA in Massachusetts. The team is

studying how artificial intelligence can help perfusionists optimize use of the machines during cardiac surgery. (Photo by Deirdre Salvas)



Upcoming Events

- The Office of Research Protections, Policy, and Education (ORPP&E) will hold a webinar on the submission process to the Central IRB through IRBNet on **Jan. 13, 2022**, at 2:00 pm EST. Registration is through [WebEx](#).
- Louis Dell'Italia will be presented CSR&D's highest honor for clinical research contributions, the John B. Barnwell Award, in a ceremony planned locally at the Birmingham VA Medical Center on **Jan. 27, 2022**.



Achievements and Milestones

VHA 75th anniversary commemorative eBook—As part of its 75th anniversary celebration, VHA released a commemorative [eBook](#) that highlights VHA's past, present, and future. Pages 54–61 feature an enlightening, informative, and highly readable account of the VA research program, past and present.

Career Milestones

Welcome to Matthew Verna—ORD recently welcomed Mr. Matthew Verna as the new director of finance. Mr. Verna has a financial background exceeding 25 years. Prior to coming to ORD, he served as the chief financial officer for the VA Maryland Health Care System for the past two years. He was previously assigned to ORD as a budget analyst in the finance department, supporting the Cooperative Studies Program for 10 years. In addition to working for VA, Mr. Verna served in the United States Marine Corps and worked for several private sector companies, such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Northrop Grumman, and AECOM. Mr. Verna holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Strayer University, and is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration degree.

History Corner



Diabetes drug from Gila monster venom—In 1990, endocrinologist Dr. John Eng at the Bronx VA Medical Center and Dr. Jean-Pierre Raufman, now with the Baltimore VA Medical Center, discovered a peptide in the venom of a Southwest desert lizard that would become the basis for the diabetes drug exenatide, sold as Byetta. Seeking new hormones, they were intrigued by research showing that venom from some snakes and lizards, including the Gila monster, enlarged the pancreas, where insulin is made. The Gila monster is able to maintain steady blood sugar levels even after long periods of not eating. Their research showed that the newly discovered peptide triggers the synthesis and release of insulin from beta cells in the pancreas, thus laying the groundwork for exenatide’s development.

Anyone interested in receiving general news updates about VA research is invited to [sign up](#) for our VA Research Currents and VA Research Spotlight monthly emails.



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