

## CSRD August Newsletter

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### Clinical Science Research and Development



## Terri Talks

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### Message from the Director

Our challenges for clinical research continue as we turn the page of the calendar towards September. Over the summer we have focused much attention on two areas in particular: promoting the way forward for high priority COVID19 clinical trials, and understanding the issues now facing our investigators, especially our Career Development awardees. I believe that most are aware that we have been conducting surveys: one to assess the research hold situation for funded awards, and one to better understand what our CADE awardees need in particular to successfully complete their projects. In the former case, we anticipate having the data we need to plan with the field for delays and associated budget impact by early September, as we have received a full response from research offices for data which we need to summarize. In the latter case, for CADE awardees, we will not only collect data, we will be extending invitations to talk through issues together over the next month or so, to make sure we can be highly apprised of any challenges for these scientists and problem solve together.

We clearly continue to be in awe of the amazing productivity, resourcefulness, and focus that our scientists are showing now, and we appreciate suggestions and new ideas which we are happy to consider for making this time one of driving solutions. Thank you all for your efforts, every day, for our Veterans.

--Terri

### Program Announcement for Priority Topics for Suicide Prevention Research

This Program Announcement published August 10, 2020, is intended to summarize important suicide prevention research areas in CSRD that we encourage VA scientists to consider when developing applications for our funding opportunities. It describes two specific areas of interest we hope to further develop in our research program – lethal means safety (reducing access to or improving the safety of, lethal means used for suicide) and Impacts from COVID-19 on potential rise in suicide rates. We intend to prioritize these topics when applications are submitted for scientific peer review through our standing funding mechanisms and cycles. This Program Announcement is intended to identify priority research areas for the VA scientific community that will inform and/or improve evidence-based lethal means safety practices to prevent suicide among Veterans and to support focused research that will inform and/or improve suicide

prevention efforts in the context of COVID-19. It includes listings of research topics that are examples of areas of interest that could be of interest to CSRD. The complete Program Announcement may be accessed on the CSRD website at <https://www.research.va.gov/services/csrd/>. For further information contact us at VHABLRD-CSRDRD@va.gov.

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## Fall Merit Review: CSRD Pilot for Clinical Trial Priority Topics

During the Fall 2020 Merit Review cycle, CSRD will attempt to pilot a prioritization approach for certain clinical trials topics. The overall goal is to work with the PIs and their research offices to determine if early funding decisions can result in quicker start up times, especially considering the delays we are experiencing during the pandemic. In this round in particular we will be concentrating on COVID19 clinical trials and Precision Oncology clinical trials as priority topics. During September, we will be working with the local research offices who have such trial applications to determine whether early decisions and hence early Just in Time will be impactful in meeting the overall goal to start priority trials as quickly as possible once approved for funding.

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### Staff Highlight: Chinagozi Ugwu

Chinagozi “Cheena” Ugwu joined CSRD as a Health Science Specialist at the beginning of August 2020. Chinagozi is coming from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). At NCHS, she worked in the Reproductive Statistics Branch (RSB) within the Division of Vital Statistics (DVS) as an epidemiologist for over 4 years. Chinagozi was involved in producing the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), which gathers information on family life, marriage, pregnancy, infertility, and men’s and women’s health. Her focus areas on the NSFG included: infertility services and reproductive health; adoption and nonbiological children; health conditions and health services; and desires for future children. Earlier this year Chinagozi was deployed to the CDC Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to serve as data unit lead in the Clinical On-Call Task Force (COCTF), for the Incident Management System (IMS) COVID-19 Response. While on the COCTF, Chinagozi led a team that developed a dashboard for the visualization of task force activities and produced reports for external stakeholders. She received her bachelor’s degree in Biology from Kenyon College and earned a Masters of Public Health in epidemiology from the University of Arizona. Chinagozi enjoys serving her community through volunteer activities.

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## Please Meet and Greet Us

This section will return as soon as we are able to travel! In the meantime, we hope you are staying safe and well.

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## **CSRD Contact Information**

Please contact us with your questions or concerns:

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