

Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) FY 2008 Funding Recommendations

Medical and Prosthetics Research: \$480 million

Investments in investigator-initiated research projects at VA have led to an explosion of knowledge that promises to advance our understanding of disease and unlock strategies for prevention, treatment, and cures. Additional funding is needed to take advantage of the burgeoning opportunities to improve quality of life for our veterans. With these funds, it is expected that VA would pursue the following in fiscal year 2008:

- Deployment Health:** Study the potential long-term effects of exposures and risk factors among veterans of hazardous deployments, such as the Gulf War, Bosnia/Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. VA will develop preventative medicine efforts for future deployments.
- Genomic Medicine:** Provide progressive and cutting edge care for veterans through genomic medicine, in particular, pharmacogenomics, which involves analyzing a patient's DNA and customizing drug treatment accordingly. Researchers have learned that variations in a person's DNA can affect response to a particular drug.
- Rehabilitation:** Develop BION technology, a general purpose neural/muscular stimulator used to treat paralysis and restore function in limbs. VA also plans to enhance vocational rehabilitation programs for veterans by funding studies on mental illness and substance abuse.
- Quality Improvement:** Fund the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) program and other efforts to ensure appropriate, high-quality care for veterans with prostate cancer and dementias. VA plans to expand the QUERI program to focus on stroke rehabilitation, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and amputation.
- Chronic Diseases:** Continue, in part through the Research Enhancement Awards Program (REAP), work in understanding the prevalence as well as cost and outcomes of treatment for pulmonary, kidney, and heart diseases, diabetes, hepatitis C, and stroke. VA will also work to develop new treatments for these ailments as well as other chronic diseases.
- Traumatic Brain Injury:** Expand research on traumatic brain injury (TBI) and other blast related injuries incurred by soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Research is needed to understand the physical and psychological effects of TBI and other blast related injuries, conduct effective post deployment surveillance for TBI and support long-term studies on effective treatment for TBI.

If enacted, the President's budget represents the third consecutive year of flat-funding. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of research combined with biomedical research inflation has decreased the purchasing power of VA research. At least \$33 million is required just to restore the FY 2006 level of research activity.

Research Facilities Improvement: \$45 million

State-of-the-art research requires state-of-the-art technology, equipment, and facilities. Unfortunately, funding for the VA medical and prosthetics research program has failed to provide the resources needed to maintain, upgrade, and replace aging research facilities. Under the current system, research must compete in the minor construction budget with other facility needs for basic infrastructure and physical plant support. FOVA recommends a funding mechanism be developed to provide a steady stream of resources dedicated to renovating existing research facilities.

Medical Care: \$36.3 billion

The VA health care system is severely underfunded. Consistent with the Independent Budget, FOVA recommends an FY 2008 appropriation of at least \$36.3 billion for the VA medical care budget. The recommended increase would cover expected medical care inflation, long term care, as well as necessary improvements to address the increasing complexity and volume of care needed by VA's aging population.