

# FOVA

## Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research

A coalition of national  
organizations committed to  
quality care for America's  
veterans

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April 3, 2006

The Honorable James T. Walsh  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research coalition (FOVA) writes in regard to the FY 2007 appropriation for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research and Development (R&D) program. FOVA represents more than eighty national academic, medical and scientific societies; voluntary health organizations; patient advocacy groups; and veterans' service organizations committed to ensuring high quality care for veterans.

As a condition of membership, FOVA members agree not to pursue earmarks or designated amounts or percentages for specific areas of research in the annual appropriation for the VA R&D program. We urge you and your colleagues on the Committee on Appropriations to take a similar stance in regard to FY 2007 funding for VA research. The undersigned members of FOVA oppose earmarks because they jeopardize the following strengths of the VA R&D program:

- **The VA research program is exclusively intramural;** that is, only VA employees holding at least a five-eighths salaried appointment are eligible to receive VA research awards originating from the VA R&D appropriation. This principle provides VA with an extremely powerful tool for recruiting and retaining the highly qualified clinician-investigators who provide quality care to veterans, focus their research on conditions prevalent in the veteran population, and educate future clinicians to care for veterans.
- **VA has well-established and highly refined policies and procedures for peer review and national management of the entire VA research portfolio.** Peer review of proposals ensures that VA's limited resources support the most meritorious research. Additionally, centralized VA administration provides coordination of VA's national research priorities, aids in moving new discoveries into clinical practice, and instills confidence in overall oversight of VA research, including human subject protections, while preventing costly duplication of effort and infrastructure.
- **VA research encompasses a wide range of types of research.** Designated amounts for specific areas of research compromise VA's ability to fund ongoing programs in other areas and force VA to delay or even cancel plans for new initiatives. Biomedical research inflation alone, estimated at 5.5% for FY 2005 and projected at 4.5% for FY 2006, has reduced the purchasing power of the R&D appropriation by \$22.7 million and \$16.5 million respectively for a total impact of \$39.2 million over just two years. In the absence of commensurate increases, VA is unable to sustain important research on diabetes, hepatitis C, heart diseases, stroke and substance abuse, or address emerging needs for more research on post traumatic stress disorder and long-term treatment and rehabilitation of polytraumatic blast injures. While Congress certainly should provide direction to assist VA in setting its research priorities, earmarked funding exacerbates resource allocation problems.

FOVA urges you to continue preserving the integrity of the VA research program as an intramural program firmly grounded in scientific peer review. These are principles under which it has functioned so successfully and with such positive benefits to veterans and the nation since its inception.

Thank you for considering our views.

The Undersigned Members of FOVA (see next page)

Administrators of Internal Medicine  
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine  
Alliance for Aging Research  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Anatomists  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Spinal Cord Injury Nurses  
American Association of Spinal Cord Injury Psychologists and  
Social Workers  
American College of Chest Physicians  
American College of Clinical Pharmacology  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Rheumatology  
American Dental Education Association  
American Federation for Medical Research  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Heart Association  
American Hospital Association  
American Lung Association  
American Military Retirees Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Optometric Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Paraplegia Society  
American Physiological Society  
American Podiatric Medical Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society for Bone and Mineral Research  
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental  
Therapeutics  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Nephrology  
American Thoracic Society  
Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory  
Animal Care International  
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology  
Association of Academic Health Centers  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Professors of Medicine  
Association of Program Directors in Internal Medicine  
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry  
Association of Specialty Professors  
Association of VA Chiefs of Medicine  
Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists  
Blinded Veterans Association  
Blue Star Mothers of America  
Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine  
Coalition for Health Services Research  
Digestive Disease National Coalition  
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology  
Gerontological Society of America  
Gold Star Wives  
Hepatitis Foundation International  
International Foundation for Functional Gastroenterological  
Disorders  
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International  
Legion of Valor of the USA, Inc.  
Medical Device Manufacturers Association  
Medicine-Pediatrics Program Directors Association  
Military Officers Association of America  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and  
Prosthetics  
National Association for Uniformed Services  
National Association of VA Dermatologists  
National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists  
National Association of Veterans' Research and Education  
Foundations  
National Mental Health Association  
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs  
Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Paralyzed Veterans of America Spinal Cord Research  
Foundation  
Partnership Foundation for Optometric Education  
Society for Investigative Dermatology  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Spinal Cord Research Foundation  
The Endocrine Society  
United Spinal Association  
Veterans Affairs Physician Assistant Association  
Veterans of the Vietnam War and the Veterans Coalition