



## Clinical Science Research and Development



# Terri Talks

Vol. 3, No. 4, 2021.4.29

## Message from the Director

Hello All,

I wanted to make just a brief comment about how thankful we are for the responsiveness from the field during this time of pandemic. You have endured many challenges due to the pandemic related to conducting clinical research. You have made modifications where needed to continue your good work. You have continued to obtain Just-in-Time approvals so that we are nearly all caught up with outstanding or delayed JIT projects. And most recently, you have let us know about returning funds which cannot be obligated this Fiscal Year (e.g. by 9/30/21). Related to this last item, CSRD has received enough funding back to us for reprogramming that we are able to offer a supplemental funding opportunity focused on resources that might be used to overcome some of the impacts to research from the pandemic (see below). The good news in all of this is that our careful management now will make a difference for all going forward. Thank you for all you do, *Terri*

## May 7 is closing date for CSRD Opportunity for Supplemental Funding

CSRD is pleased to announce the opportunity for limited supplemental FY21 funding. This opportunity comes in part due to returned funds that stations indicated could not be obligated this fiscal year. We are particularly interested in supporting requests for resources needed to increase the enrollment/recruitment of clinical studies to ensure timely completion of approved study goals and where funding could be used to potentially recover from research delays due to the impact of the pandemic. Requests for resources to support

modifications made, e.g., changing methods of data collection, recruitment, etc., are also of interest.

Please work with your local VA research office to submit requests. Questions and requests may be directed to: [VHABLRD-CSR@va.gov](mailto:VHABLRD-CSR@va.gov).

## Letters of Intent due May 3

May 3 is the deadline for Letters of Intent for those funding mechanisms with an LOI requirement, including Career Development and Clinical Trials. For clinical trials, we continue to encourage PI's to connect with their Scientific Portfolio Manager in advance of the submission deadline to discuss portfolio fit and program interest.



Each year in May, VA National Research Week marks the innovation and accomplishments of VA researchers on behalf of Veterans. The 2021 Research Week events will highlight the pioneering work of eight awardees including two CSR Barnwell Awardees. The virtual awards ceremony is scheduled for 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 19. Please register by May 12 at:

<https://www.research.va.gov/researchweek/2021/virtualaward-registration.cfm>.

Registration for a research symposium for a deeper dive into the research, that is scheduled for 3 p.m, Friday, May 21, may be accomplished at:

<https://www.hsr.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/catalog-upcoming-session.cfm?UID=3978>

The CSR awardees to be recognized are:

## Dr. David Oslin

**Barnwell Award 2020**

**Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC,  
Philadelphia**



Dr. Oslin's research focuses on measurement-based care practices that incorporate genetics. A national leader in integrating mental health care into primary clinics, he has introduced a new mental health training curriculum and co-authored an important paper that introduced the concept of collecting biosamples to study alcohol use disorder.

## Dr. Jeffrey Curtis

**Barnwell Award 2019**

**VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System**



Dr. Curtis has made many fundamental contributions to understanding chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung defense against bacterial pathogens. He is currently studying the role white blood cells play in pulmonary immunity and diseases like COPD and the mechanisms responsible for clearing away cellular debris in the lungs.

## VA ORD Supplements to Curate Computable Phenotype and Submit to the VA Phenomics Library - CIPHER due May 5



**Objective:** to facilitate sharing phenotype definitions and data curation mapping algorithms through the centralized resource, CIPHER, to improve the reusability of information across the VA, to help expedite ongoing research and to optimize phenotype definitions across the research and clinical enterprises overall.

**Requirements:**

Applicants should have

- an active, funded VA Merit Award,
- specific aim(s) that are in the process of creating, or have created, curated phenotypes and/or data metrics such as algorithm descriptions, data mappings, or standardized health metrics,
- staff already available to complete curation of phenotype(s) and support the submission of required information to CIPHER.

**Budget and Duration:** budget cap is \$50,000 for a maximum duration of 12 months

**Due:** May 5, 2021 for BLRD and CSRD projects

**For more information or to receive a copy of the announcement, email [VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov](mailto:VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov).**

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## CSRD Community of Science III Meeting

On April 28, CSRD sponsored COSIII on the topic of immunity related to COVID19. The meeting itself was generously hosted by a team of researchers from the Cleveland VAMC lead by Robert Bonomo, Carey Shive and Don Anthony to name a few. With nine presentations many attendees expressed their enthusiasm for, and timeliness of, the topics presented:

- "SARS-CoV-2 spike protein skews T cells towards inflammatory pathways through activation of ERK kinase signaling pathways"
- "The role of NK cells in SARS-COV-2 infection"
- "Innate Immunity and COVID-19: targeting trained immune responses"
- "Immunologic resilience and Covid-19 survival advantage"
- "B cell phenotype in convalescent COVID-19 patients in the Birmingham VAMC"
- "Reduced BNT162b2 mRNA vaccine response in SARS-CoV-2-naive nursing home residents"
- "Secondary immune responses to SARS-CoV-2,"
- "COVID-19 Antibody Immunity"
- "Adaptive Immunity Post-Vaccination"

If you are interested in the slides or briefing from this meeting, please email [Robert.bonomo@va.gov](mailto:Robert.bonomo@va.gov) or [barbara.heath2@va.gov](mailto:barbara.heath2@va.gov).

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## DEI Application Submission Workshop

Shout out and congratulations to the ORD Diversity Equity and Inclusion team who sponsored our first Application Submission Workshop for investigators who are under represented in the scientific community. Vetisha McClair lead the workshop over two days, with many engaged participants and presenters. We are grateful for everyone's efforts on every level who are working to achieve goals related to equity for ORD.

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## Publication Highlights:

### Jasmohan Bajaj

A study from Dr. Bajaj of the Central Virginia VA Health Care System and Virginia Commonwealth University, was recently published in the top-ranked journal, Gastroenterology. Dr. Bajaj shared the following comments:

"We found a high burden of antibiotic resistance genes in the gut microbes of patients with cirrhosis, which was higher than that seen in patients on dialysis and those with diabetes. These genes independently predicted hospitalizations and death in this group of patients. Given the major impact of antibiotic resistance, this is a major step forward and we previously published that fecal transplant can reduce this burden." A news story from Virginia Commonwealth University about the article may be accessed at. The article may be accessed at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33857456/>.

The study was partly supported by CSRD Merit Review funding.

### George Ioannou

Dr. George Innouni's paper on the Development of the COVIDVax Model for vaccination prioritization was recently published in Jama Network Open. The article may be accessed at

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2778179>.

An editorial regarding it may be accessed at

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2778187>

Dr. Ioannou is from the Seattle VA.

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## Research Supplements to Support Diversity due June 1

Eligible PIs with VA Merits with at least 2 years remaining may apply for this supplement that supports mentored research experiences for early career scientists from underrepresented populations. Other criteria for applicants include underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individual with disabilities and Veterans. For information or to receive a copy of the announcement, email [Carol.Fowler@va.gov](mailto:Carol.Fowler@va.gov).

## Please Meet and Greet Us

Until we are able to travel, CSRD staff members will be attending virtual meetings, We will be presenting funding opportunities in panels during the following:

- 2021 Virtual Society of Biological Psychiatry (SOBP) Annual meeting April 29-May 1.
- Annual MIRECC meeting on April 30
- Also, during VA Research Week May 17-21, Mark Roltsch will be presenting at the Birmingham VA Research Week.

## CSRD Contact Information

General Mailbox: [VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov](mailto:VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov)

Just in Time: <https://vaww.gateway.research.va.gov/jit/Default.asp?>

Career Development: [VHACADEReview@va.gov](mailto:VHACADEReview@va.gov)

Clinical Trials: [clin-review@va.gov](mailto:clin-review@va.gov)

## CSRD Staff Highlight: Vetisha McClair



Dr. Vetisha L. McClair is a Health Science Officer and Scientific Program Manager who joined CSRD in 2018. Her portfolio includes clinical mental health research projects, including those focused on PTSD, Mood/Anxiety Disorders, Suicide Prevention and SMI. Prior to the VA she served as a Social Science Research Analyst in the Research and Rapid Cycle Evaluation Group at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS, where she led the program evaluations of several mental health-related healthcare demonstration projects.

Vetisha completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in the Section on Developmental Genetic Epidemiology at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) after earning her Ph.D. and M.S. in Counseling

Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a B.S. in Psychology from Howard University. She has a generalist-orientation and has experience in the treatment of a wide-variety of psychological and substance use disorders. Vetisha has also provided psychological treatment in a variety of settings (Veterans Affairs medical centers, disability services, and out-patient hospitals) and is a licensed Psychologist in the state of Maryland.

Sent to Email Address on behalf of US Department of Veterans Affairs

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