

## Amputation and Prosthetics Outcomes Research

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Office of Research and Development (ORD), announces the opportunity for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) investigators to submit proposals for research focusing on amputation and health outcomes.

Designated research funds are available to support rehabilitative health services research that will produce new knowledge for improving the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of care delivery for patients with amputations and prosthetics by drawing on the perspectives and experiences of diverse disciplines and professions.

An important goal of the solicitation is to optimize amputee functioning, independence, and quality of life. Approaches are expected to incorporate outcome evaluations, including defining best practices involving traditional and nontraditional rehabilitation treatment for amputees, including use of prosthetics and documenting their impact toward improving patient- and system-level outcomes. Patient-level studies intended to explain the outcomes that most directly concern patients and their families, as well as system-level studies intended to explain and guide improvements in the design, administration, and/or management of prostheses services, are vital. Priority patient- and system-level rehabilitative amputee and prosthetic questions include, but are not limited to, validation studies of the National Prosthetic Patient Database (NPPD), analyses of the relationship between delivery of rehabilitation services and resulting outcomes, and examination of disorders and subsequent risk factors that commonly result in amputations.

Injuries inflicted on military personnel serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom underscore the need for research efforts to address the outcomes of rehabilitative services, specifically, prosthetic services for traumatic injury amputees. Also of great importance is the rapidly growing veteran amputee population related to noncombat conditions, i.e., direct complications of diabetes and peripheral atherosclerotic disease. Regardless of the cause for amputation, whether from combat, civilian accidents, or the result of progressive diseases, the ultimate goal for VHA clinicians and researchers is to provide veterans with maximum quality of life and functioning.

Proposals are due June 8, 2004, and will be reviewed June 15, 2004. The principal investigator and coprincipal investigators (Co-PIs) must have doctoral and/or medical doctoral degrees and at least a five-eighths VA appointment.

For more information, contact Denise Burton, PhD, at 202-254-0268 or [denise.burton@hq.med.va.gov](mailto:denise.burton@hq.med.va.gov), or Martha Bryan, EdD, HSR&D, at 202-254-0251 or [Martha.bryan@hq.med.va.gov](mailto:Martha.bryan@hq.med.va.gov). Letter of intent (LOI) instructions, proposal development, and submission guidelines are available on-line at [www.vard.org](http://www.vard.org), "Guidelines for Researchers and Opportunities for Funding."

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## Technology Assessment of Major Limb Prosthetics

Rehabilitation Research and Development (RR&D) Service, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), offers an opportunity for VA investigators to compete for research funding for studies focusing on technology assessment of major limb prosthetics.

Major limb loss is a devastating condition afflicting a growing number of military personnel serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The urgency to address the needs of amputees cannot be overstated. Proper prescriptions, rehabilitation, and functioning are vital to the successful use of prosthetics by amputees. The need for comprehensive objective information about the quality and functional reliability of prostheses is paramount.

RR&D will accept research proposals that focus on technological assessment of major limb prostheses to provide an objective assessment of prosthetic durability, stability, cost-effectiveness, long-term use, and a compendium of other important factors relevant to clinical efficacy for veteran amputees.

Investigators such as certified prosthetists, biomedical engineers, physiatrists, orthopedic surgeons, and physical and occupational therapists who challenge existing paradigms and incorporate objective assessments of prostheses quality and functional reliability are necessary to achieve clinical efficacy. It is expected that investigators incorporate multisite interdisciplinary approaches that improve upon prosthetic design and result in devices

with higher performance and longer life. Development of guidelines for prosthetics use to ensure that the prescription grading system will be of value in the clinical decision-making process is also desirable. Research should be designed to establish evidence-based practices for the reliable use and limits of prostheses and to develop or establish research methodologies, which may be reproduced for further evaluation activities in this area. Investigations that combine bioengineering and clinical assessments will receive high priority.

Proposals are due June 1, 2004, and will be reviewed June 15, 2004. The principal investigator and coprincipal investigators (Co-PIs) must have doctoral and/or medical doctoral degrees and at least a five-eighths VA appointment.

For more information, contact Denise Burton, PhD, at 202-254-0268 or [denise.burton@hq.med.va.gov](mailto:denise.burton@hq.med.va.gov). Letter of intent (LOI) instructions, proposal development, and submission guidelines are available on-line at [www.vard.org](http://www.vard.org), "Guidelines for Researchers and Opportunities for Funding."

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## Traumatic Amputations Summit

As part of Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) overall response to the increase in traumatic amputations resulting from the current military conflicts, Office of Research and Development (ORD) has issued a series of new solicitations for research efforts aimed at improving the quality and outcomes of VA healthcare delivered to amputees. Among the new solicitations is a joint announcement from Rehabilitation Research and Development (RR&D) Service and Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Service to establish a new Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) Center on amputations. QUERI is an innovative VA program

combining research and clinical quality improvement goals and approaches to facilitate the translation, or implementation, of research into routine practice to improve the quality, outcomes, and efficiency of VA healthcare services. QUERI Centers work to identify evidence-based clinical practices, to assess current practices and outcomes within VA that identify quality gaps and other areas where improvement is needed, and to implement—and evaluate—evidence-based programs and strategies to achieve performance improvements.

To better identify the needed focus and activities of the proposed QUERI Center, ORD will host a two-day

agenda-setting summit meeting on amputations on May 19 and 20, 2004. This invitation-only summit will bring together experts from RR&D, HSR&D, VA clinical and operations leadership, non-VA experts, and stakeholders (from Department of Defense and other federal agencies, Disabled American Veterans and other not-for-profit organizations, etc.) to review the current “state of the art” in research and clinical care practices and to identify critical gaps in research and practice. The summit will supplement a related workshop that was held in November 2003, but will focus more on practice-relevant research needs rather than more basic research. Summit products are expected to include a detailed research agenda and preliminary plans for the proposed Amputations QUERI Center. In addition, recommendations for VA healthcare

operations leaders will be proposed to help them to assess and improve care in parallel with the research efforts.

Readers interested in learning more about the QUERI amputations solicitation, QUERI in general, or other ORD funding opportunities, please visit the ORD Web at <http://www.va.gov/resdev>.

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